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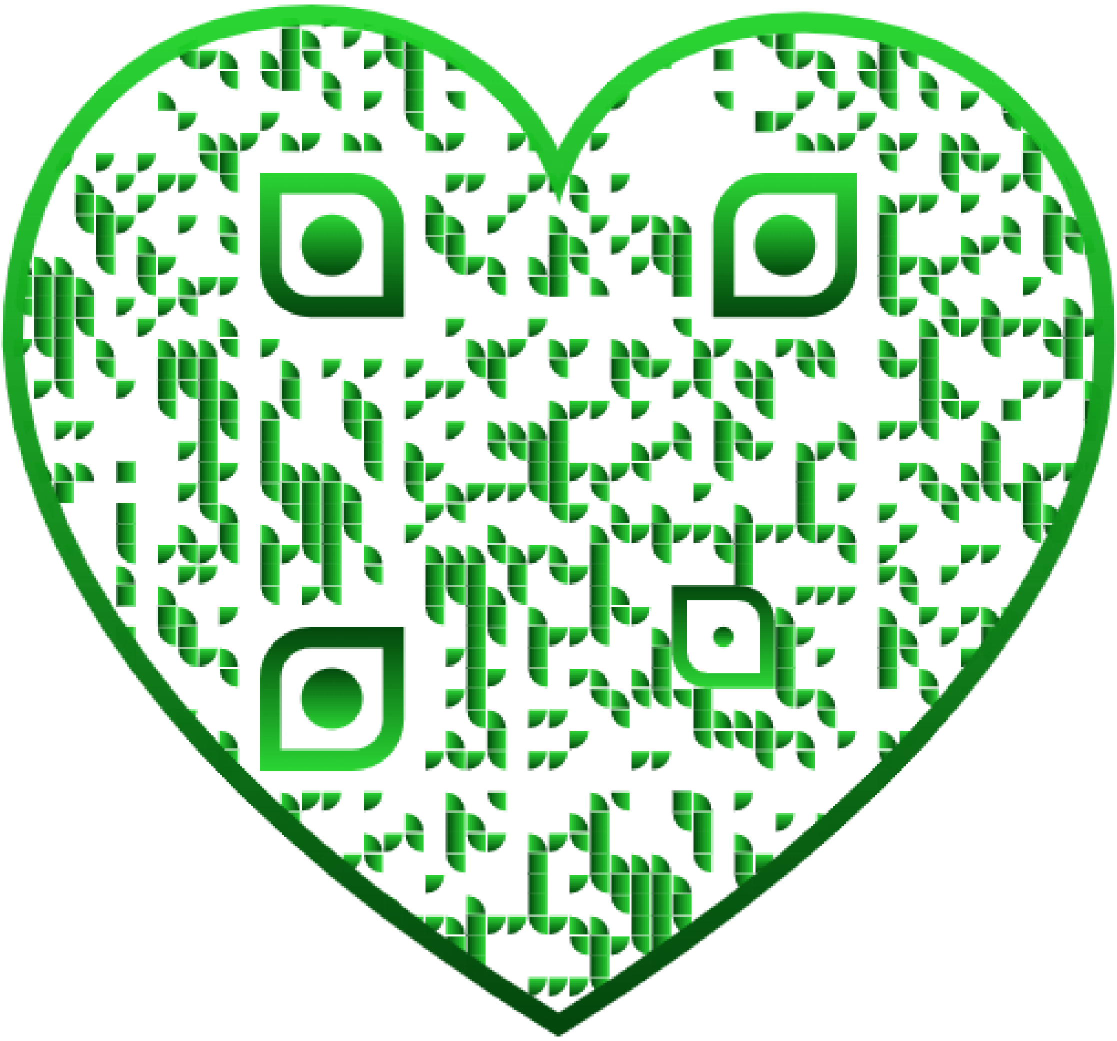

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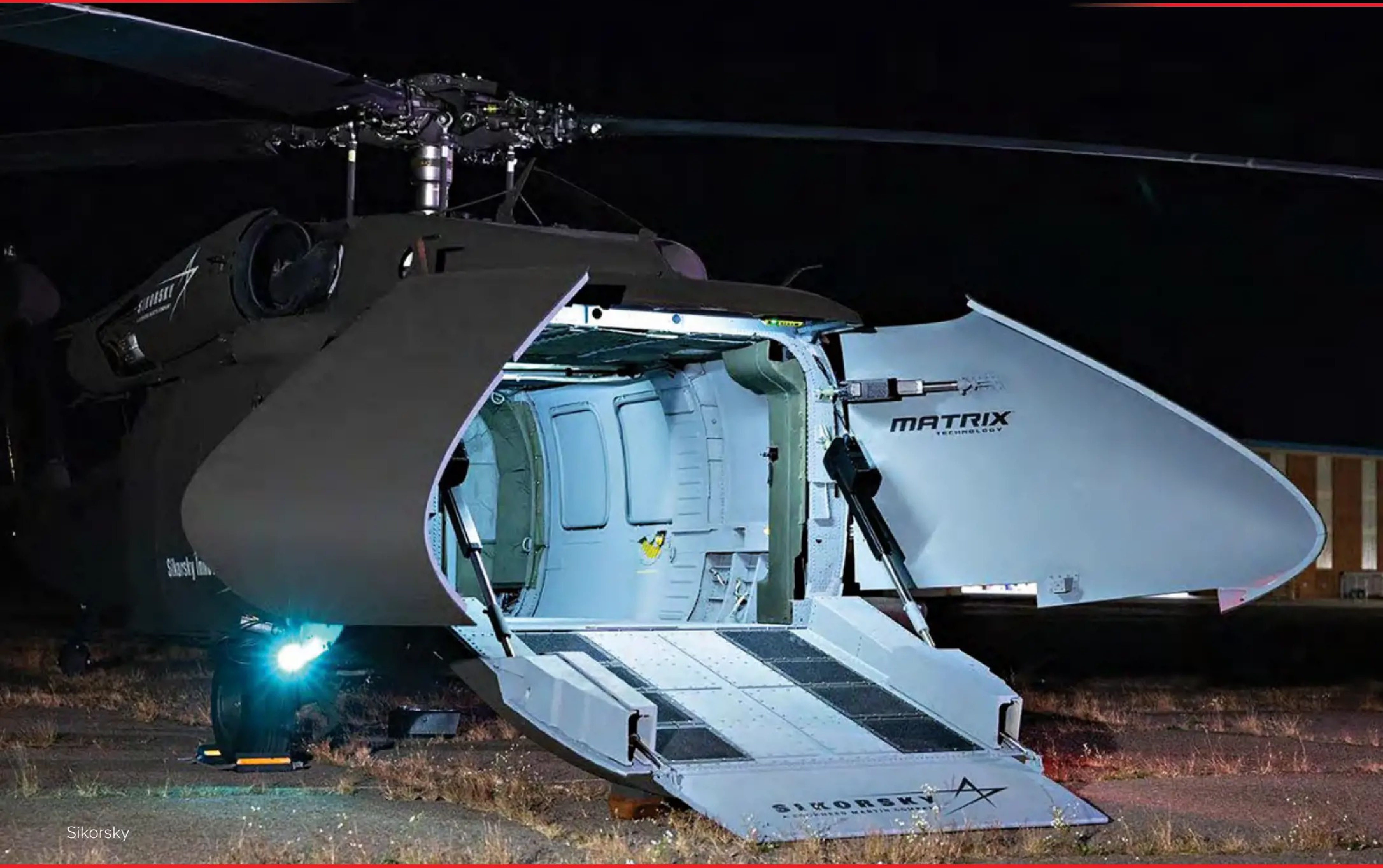

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On the cover

A RCAF CF-188 callsign "SCAR21" dives away from the tanker, which was a RCAF CC-130HT. Both were deployed to the UK for Ex Cobra Warrior 25-2. Key-Ben Stanley Hall

Welcome

Welcome to the final 2025 edition of *Aviation News*. One huge headline and a great one for the UK industry is the multibillion-pound deal with Turkey for 20 Eurofighter Typhoons. It will be great to see those primer Typhoons roar out of Warton again on their first test flights. Turkey also awarded Cambridge based, Marshall Aerospace with the entry into service and support contract for procurement of 12 ex RAF C-130J Hercules.

Back to the Eurofighter, Germany has ordered 20 more tranche 5 Typhoons and plans to operate the type into the 2060s by adding on an EW role to the platform, replacing the ageing Panavia Tornado. Talking future, Sikorsky in just ten months have taken a concept and made it happen with what it is calling the U-hawk. A completely autonomous version of its legendary Black Hawk helicopter with clam-shell cargo doors replacing the usual cockpit area. Will pilots exist on the front line in the future? That is a hovering question that always opens an interesting debate.

In sadder news, at the time of writing this, a UK regional airline was on the brink of collapsing. Eastern Airways suspended operations on October 27 and cancelled all its flights after 28 years of ops. This is reportedly due to the airline facing financial strains since the COVID-19 period.

In other commercial news, PIA returned to the UK after a five-year ban, running two flights per week between Manchester and the country's capital, Islamabad. The airline looks to restart services also at Birmingham and London Heathrow soon.

Our features this month cover a wide variety of aviation world topics. We look at flying in business class on short haul flights, explore the ops of the soon-to-be legendary Samaritan's Purse DC-8, and take a nostalgic trip around what is now known as MOD Lyneham.

In other features, we discuss the current commercial turboprop market and what the OEMs have to offer. We look back at what was known as the Rainbow Airline and take a dive into the RAF organised multinational training exercise, Cobra Warrior 25-2.

I hope you enjoy the magazine and thank you for being with us on what has been a super interesting year across aviation.

Joe

Joe Campion, Editor

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Eastern Airways Suspends Operations

Key Collection

EASTERN AIRWAYS, based at Humberside Airport, North Lincolnshire, filed a notice of intention to appoint an administrator on October 27, and all its scheduled flights were cancelled. The airline had been operating scheduled services from Aberdeen, Humberside, London Gatwick, Newquay, Teesside and Wick. Services undertaken on behalf of KLM, from Amsterdam to Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Humberside, Leeds-Bradford, Norwich and Teesside using Embraer E-family airliners, were discontinued on October 5, after the Dutch flag-carrier ended the wet-lease arrangement.

The notice to appoint administrators provides ten days of legal protection for a company from its creditors, allowing it to explore ways of restructuring, securing additional investment or find a buyer, as well as prepare it for insolvency. It means that the final fate of the airline would be decided by November 5.

Weak demand on some domestic routes and increasingly difficult financial conditions were reportedly behind Eastern's filing. It faced financial issues as passenger numbers declined following the COVID-19 pandemic, recording a £19.7m net loss for the fiscal year ending in March 2024, with total debts approaching £26m.

As of October 2025, Eastern had a fleet of ten aircraft, comprising two ATR 72-600s, four British Aerospace Jetstream 41s, one Embraer E170 and three E190s. All the airline's aircraft have been returned to lessors and parked up. The ATRs departed for Dinard-Pleurtuit-St Malo in France prior to the announcement that Eastern had ceased operations, joining a third that had previously been operated by the airline, there from late September. Three of the Jetstreams were stored at Humberside from October 26, with one being parked at Aberdeen two days earlier. Having withdrawn a second Embraer E170 to Exeter in August 2025, its final example arrived at Saarbrücken Airport in Germany on October 15, where it was joined by one of the E190s 12 days later. The other pair of the jets went to Norwich Airport in mid-October.

Eastern's social media sites on Facebook, Instagram and X were no longer functioning by October 29 (if not earlier), while searches for flights on its website generate the message "Unfortunately, there is no availability on the route selected," followed by "Please search again." **David Willis**

American Airlines A321XLR to Edinburgh

American Airlines

IT WAS announced on October 30, that Edinburgh, Scotland, will be the first international route for the new American Airlines Airbus A321XLR.

The carrier is planning to operate the airliner to the Scottish capital from New York-JFK International Airport for its summer 2026 schedule from March 8 to October 24. Brian Znotins, American's Senior Vice President of Network and Schedule Planning, said: "We could not be more excited to connect the Big Apple with Auld Reekie. This is the right aircraft to open this route and with an elevated premium experience for travellers to enjoy." American Airlines said it would start selling tickets for its Edinburgh service with the A321XLR on November 3, 2025.

American's New York-JFK-Edinburgh route will become the carrier's second seasonal service to the Scottish capital. The carrier operated a flight from Philadelphia to Edinburgh for the summer 2025 season.

It plans to operate the Philadelphia-Edinburgh service again in the next summer schedule from March 28 to October 24, 2026, using Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Gordon Dewar, the chief executive officer of Edinburgh Airport, said: "It's fantastic to see American Airlines growing its presence at Scotland's busiest airport and offering even more direct connectivity to New York and beyond."

He continued: "There's strong demand for transatlantic travel, and this addition strengthens an already impressive schedule from Edinburgh. It also opens American Airlines' extensive domestic network, making it easier for both business and leisure travellers to reach destinations across the USA."

The American Airlines A321XLR cabin will feature 20 Flagship Suite seats, 12 premium economy seats and 123 main cabin seats. The carrier said the new aircraft "offers an elevated inflight experience". All passengers flying on the aircraft will have access to high-speed Wi-Fi and complimentary seatback entertainment featuring Bluetooth connectivity. **Mark Broadbent**

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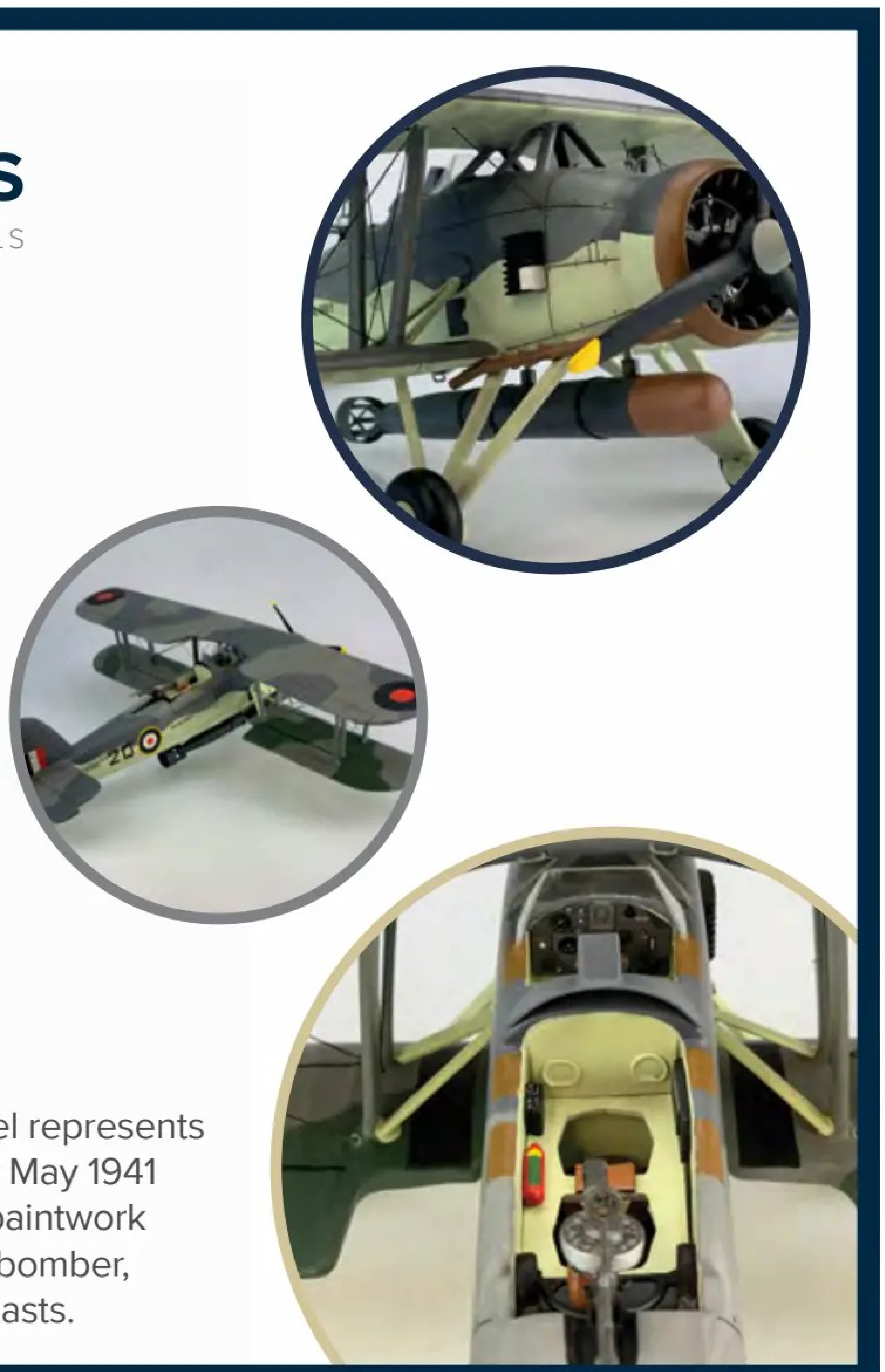

This expertly handcrafted and hand-painted 1/72 scale Fairey Swordfish model represents aircraft Reg 2Q from 825 Squadron of the Royal Navy, as it appeared on 26th May 1941 during the pivotal sinking of the Bismarck. Its detailed carving and authentic paintwork capture the historical significance and technical details of this iconic torpedo bomber, making it an essential piece for serious collectors and aviation history enthusiasts.

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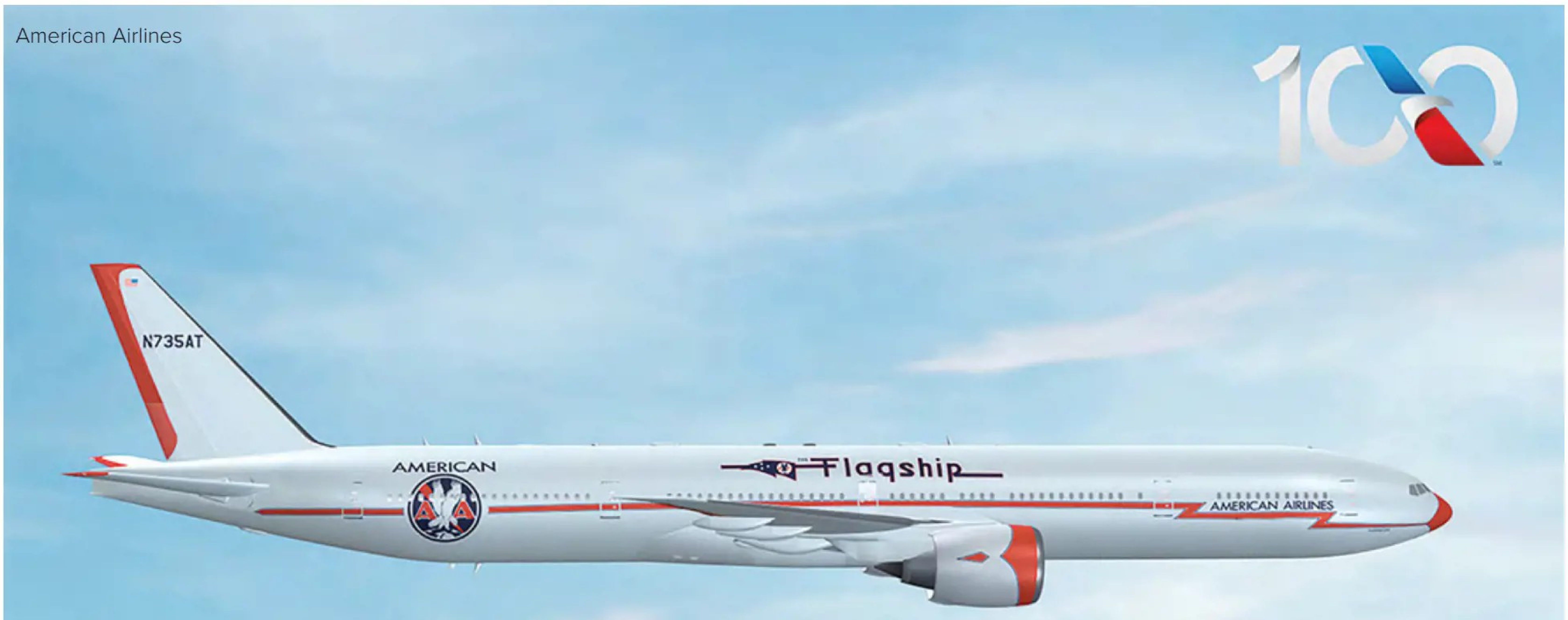
American Airlines reveal Flagship 777



American Airlines

AMERICAN AIRLINES released a flagship livery for one of its 777-300s, N735AT, ahead of its centennial year. The aircraft is due to start flying this month (November) with the striking paint scheme.

The airline celebrates its centenary on April 15, 2026, and the livery is to display one of the airline's original liveries while blending in a modern flair due to the airline upgrading the aircraft to feature a new and more luxurious interior cabin.

The 777 will display the Silver Eagle paint colour found on more than 1,600 aircraft within its fleet. An orange lighting bolt is visible on both sides which was seen on the airlines Douglas DC-3 fleet on the Douglas DC-3. The DC-3s of American's fleet were given names based on the cities they served in. To keep up that tradition N735AT will be named 'Flagship DFW' to pay homage to the airline's home and largest hub.

Game over for PLAY

ICELANDIC LOW-COST carrier PLAY ceased operations on September 29 after prolonged financial difficulties and a faltering attempt to overhaul its business model.

The Reykjavík-based airline said its performance had been "weaker than expected" in recent months, compounded by "negative media coverage" and "discontent among some employees due to changes in the company's strategy". Around 400 staff will lose their jobs, while thousands of passengers were left to reorganise travel plans.

PLAY's revised network strategy, introduced in late 2024, aimed to end loss-making transatlantic routes to Boston, Washington/Dulles and New York/Stewart in favour of point-to-point leisure flying within southern Europe. Only four of its ten Airbus A320neo-family aircraft remained dedicated to Icelandic operations, with the remaining six placed under a Maltese AOC and leased out under a new hybrid business model designed to generate off-season revenue.

The approach was intended to provide stability by reducing exposure to Iceland's pronounced seasonality, but the board later conceded the plan "could not deliver results sufficient to overcome the company's deep-rooted challenges that have built up over time. In hindsight, the new business plan should have been implemented earlier".

Founded in 2021, PLAY had sought to replicate Iceland's role as a low-cost transatlantic hub while avoiding the over-expansion that led to WOW air's demise. Its collapse, however, underlines the persistent difficulty of sustaining a small-scale Icelandic carrier amid volatile demand, thin margins, and intensifying competition from Icelandair and European budget rivals.

PLAY
AIRBUS A321neo

Charles Cunliffe

Prestwick – China cargo ops grow again

Glasgow Prestwick Airport

BEIJING CAPITAL Airlines is flying from Zhengzhou Xinzheng International Airport to the Scottish airport four times per week with Airbus A330-200F freighters.

Flight-tracking data showed the first flight, on October 16, arrived at Prestwick at 1219hrs local after a 6hrs 41mins-long flight from Karaganda International Airport, Kazakhstan, where the aircraft refuelled after leaving Zhengzhou.

The inaugural service was operated by A330-200F registration B-32MG (manufacturer's serial number 797). Photos issued by Glasgow/Prestwick Airport showed the A330F was greeted at Prestwick by a water cannon salute and a piper.

Flight-tracking data showed B-32MG departed Prestwick later that day (at 1843hrs local) for Oslo International Airport, Norway, from where the aircraft flew a nine-hour trip back to Zhengzhou.

B-32MG, the A330F that operated the first Prestwick flight and those in the first week of the service, was built in 2006 as a passenger A330-200 and registered as B-7076. Air China operated the aircraft until it was withdrawn from use in February 2021. After two years in storage at Tarbes/Lourdes International Airport, France, the aircraft underwent freighter conversion at Dresden, Germany. Re-registered as B-32MG, the aircraft joined the Beijing Capital Airlines fleet in September 2025. It was one of ten A330-200Fs in the carrier's fleet at the time the service to Prestwick began.

Skybus receives new Twin Otter

Skybus

ISLES OF Scilly Skybus has taken delivery of its first new aircraft in more than a decade – a completely rebuilt de Havilland Canada DHC-6-300 Twin Otter.

The 17-seat aircraft, registered G-NETS (c/n 299), arrived at Land's End Airport on October 7 after a 4,000-mile ferry flight from Calgary, Canada, where it underwent an extensive three-year rebuild and modernisation by Rocky Mountain Aircraft. Although originally built nearly 55 years ago, the aircraft has been restored to near-new condition, featuring a full structural overhaul, upgraded systems, and a modern Garmin G600 flightdeck.

The airframe has had a colourful career. First delivered to Pakistan International Airlines in February 1971, it later served with Air Alpes in France, Sweden's Syd-Aero, and Norway's Coast Air. From the mid-1990s it flew in Canada with Northern Thunderbird Air and later Era Aviation in the United States, before joining Indonesia's Aviastar in 2008. Withdrawn from service in 2017, it returned to Calgary in 2022 for its full rebuild.

The aircraft will begin operations in November 2025 under a multi-year agreement with Aurigny Air Services, operating in Aurigny colours between Alderney, Guernsey and Southampton. Alongside passenger duties, it will also support air ambulance, mail, freight and pet transport services.

Skybus continues to operate lifeline routes between the Isles of Scilly and Land's End, Newquay and Exeter, with its growing Twin Otter fleet forming the backbone of these vital connections.

PIA Returns to MAN

AFTER A five-year ban, Pakistan international Airlines (PIA) returned to Manchester Airport on October 25. The airline, utilising its 777-300ER, will conduct two flights per week on a Tuesday and Saturday to the Pakistani capital of Islamabad. PIA plans to increase this eight-hour journey to four flights per week very soon. The service will operate from the airport's newly renovated terminal two.

The airline plans to start flights in Birmingham next and later, London Heathrow, dependent on demand.

Mohammad Bilal

Etihad Cargo at EMA

ETIHAD CARGO began a new route from Zayed International Airport in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates to East Midlands Airport, Leicestershire on October 27.

Etihad Cargo is using Boeing 777Fs to operate the new twice-weekly route. East Midlands Airport Commercial Director Adam Andrews said: "This new operator is a further positive sign of East Midlands Airport's success as the number one UK airport for express cargo, with the capacity and capability to grow."

Etihad Airways' Chief Cargo Officer Stanislas Brun said: "Introducing a new freighter service to East Midlands Airport is an important step for Etihad Cargo as we continue to expand our global footprint."

Brun continued : "As the UK's major hub for airfreight and cargo operations with direct access to key distribution networks for both domestic and European deliveries, this route allows for fast turnaround times and efficient customs handling."

Etihad Cargo is the latest major cargo airline to start operating into East Midlands Airport. Central Airlines became the first China-based freight carrier to fly into the airport in May 2025, starting services on behalf of the Chinese logistics firm YunExpress. Central Airlines operates Boeing 777Fs into East Midlands twice a week. Its inbound flights arrive from the city of Tianjin and departures go to Xiamen.

Atlas Air, Ethiopian Cargo and Saudia Cargo also started routes to China from East Midlands during 2025. Atlas Air began a five times per-week service to Hangzhou International Airport on May 13, 2025, using Boeing 747-400Fs. Ethiopian operated seasonal twice-weekly 777F flights for its summer 2025 schedule and Saudia has weekly 747-400BCF services to Hong Kong International Airport.

The UK cargo operator One Air also operates to China from East Midlands, with four weekly flights to Hong Kong International Airport. One Air moved its operations to East Midlands from London-Heathrow Airport in 2024. The carrier has three Boeing 747-400Fs and expanded its fleet to four aircraft in September 2025 after it received a brand-new 777F (G-ONEG, manufacturer's serial number 68494). One Air is due to receive another 777F before the end of 2025 to take its fleet to five aircraft.

ETIHAD CARGO
SEAMLESS TRADE POWERING THE UK
ETIHAD CARGO
MAG East Midlands Airport
CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH OF DIRECT CARGO FLIGHTS FROM ABU DHABI BY ETIHAD CARGO
East Midlands Airport

Korean Air orders A350F

KOREAN AIR became the latest customer of the Airbus A350F on October 31 when Airbus announced the airline was converting seven of its existing A350-1000 orders to the freighter variant. The airline has a total order of 33 A350 aircraft, comprising 20 A350-100s, six A350-000, and now seven A350Fs.

Benoît de Saint-Exupéry, Airbus EVP Sales said: "Korean Air is one of the world's largest cargo operators. The decision to add the A350F to its fleet is therefore a very significant endorsement of the aircraft's unique capabilities. The A350F will bring Korean Air the most efficient solution in the large freighter segment."

Currently, Airbus has 65 orders for the A350F, these from ten cargo carriers and one lessor.

Seagliders for Scotland?

Regent Craft

RHODE ISLAND-based Regent Craft has entered into a collaboration with Scotland's Highlands and Islands regional transport partnership (HITRANS) to explore whether the 'seaglider' flying boat concept could apply to inter-island travel. The agreement will focus on data sharing and a feasibility study to explore how Seaglider could improve the transportation network in Scotland. David Holden, HITRANS regional sustainable aviation manager, said: "This is a hugely exciting prospect for transport in the Highlands and Islands. [It] has the potential to transform how people travel across the Highlands and Islands in the future."

Adam Triolo, VP of commercial business development, Regent, added: "Our work with HITRANS is an exciting opportunity to showcase to Scotland and the Highlands communities the potential human and environmental benefits Seaglider vessels could have on coastal transportation. [The] technology is an all-electric sustainable solution that could transform the way people transit this area of natural beauty." The Seaglider has capacity for two crew and up to 12 passengers and operates exclusively over water in three modes: hull, hydrofoil and flight in ground effect. Regent says that at 55ft in length, with a 65ft wingspan and 12 propulsion units, it will be the largest ever all-electric flying machine.

NEWS IN BRIEF

British Airways took delivery of its 20th Airbus A321neo in early October. The flag carrier accepted G-TNEJ (c/n 12753), on October 9 with the jet entering service three days later. Its first A321neo, G-NEOR (c/n 8526), arrived in November 2018.

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines expects to induct its first Airbus A350 into its fleet in late 2026, the airline said, as it announced the arrival of the first A350 flight simulator in the Netherlands. The Dutch flag carrier will share a 50-strong 2023 Air France-KLM order for the A350 with stablemate Air France.

VIETJET has converted its Memorandum of Understanding (MuO) agreed in June into a solid order of 100 Airbus A321neo aircraft. This order brings the Vietnamese private airline's order for A321neos to 280 aircraft. The airline also has an order in place for 20 A330neo widebody aircraft.

SAUDI ARABIA'S newest carrier, **Riyadh Air**, has marked a major milestone on its path to full commercial service with the start of its first daily operations between Riyadh and London/Heathrow. The flights, which began on October 26, form part of a series of proving services designed to prepare the state-owned airline for its official launch. The services operate under flight numbers RX401 and RX402, departing Riyadh at 0315hrs and arriving at Heathrow at 0730hrs local time. The return leg leaves London at 0930hrs, touching down in the Saudi capital at 1915hrs. Initially limited to invited guests and Riyadh Air employees, the flights aim to test systems, crew procedures and ground handling arrangements as part of the carrier's 'Pathway to Perfect' programme of operational validation.

THE FAA has granted Breeze Airways US flag carrier status, meaning the airline is now eligible to operate international routes under bilateral aviation agreements. To coincide with the news, Breeze also announced its first three international destinations to Cancun, Punta Cana and Montego Bay from six airports. Breeze will also open a new base in Raleigh-Durham to support the expansion.

Typhoon for Turkey

TURKEY HAS signed a deal to purchase 20 Eurofighter Typhoons, along with another 20 options making Turkey the 10th operator of the fast jet.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited the Turkish capital Ankara on October 27, to seal the deal with the country's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The £8bn contract is the first order since 2017 for Typhoons built in the UK.

The deal, for the most advanced variant of the Eurofighter Typhoon, the new Tranche 4, comes with upgraded avionics, AESA radar, and enhanced combat systems. The deal will also include a comprehensive MBDA weapons package, equipping the aircraft with Meteor beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles, Brimstone, and Storm Shadow cruise missiles, but the value of that deal has not been revealed.

The first aircraft delivery will take place in 2030 in a deal that includes an associated weapons and integration package. BAE's slice of that amount has been confirmed as £5.4 billion, and according to the company the difference is the support and training element that has not yet been contracted.

BAE Systems chief executive, Charles Woodburn, commented: "Turkey's procurement of Typhoon marks the start of a new chapter in our longstanding relationship with this important NATO ally and reinforces the outstanding operational support the aircraft delivers across Europe and the Middle East as a fundamental pillar of defence and security".

Ahead of the UK Prime Minister's visit three Typhoons, ZK306, ZK344 and ZK364, left RAF Coningsby on October 24, 2025 bound for Turkey. The Turkish Ministry of National Defence reported that the Typhoons were met by F-16 Fighting Falcons upon entering Turkish airspace and escorted to Mürted Air Base on the outskirts of Ankara.

Following the Prime Minister's visit to Turkey he headed to BAE Systems facility at Warton in Lancashire where the UK Typhoon production line is located. In a speech to BAE Systems employees, with a backdrop of Typhoons, he said the RAF examples in Turkey were there to "mark the fact that we were there arriving to sign this huge deal with Turkey for 20 Typhoons with an option for another 20...".

In addition to these 20 jets, Ankara is also in negotiations to receive an additional second hand 24 Typhoons, 12 from Oman and 12 from Qatar taking Turkey's Eurofighter fleet to 44 aircraft. **Anita Roe**

BAE Systems

Gripen E for Ukraine?

UKRAINE'S PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelensky and Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson signed a letter of intent on October 22, that would see the Ukraine Air Force acquire new Gripen E fighters. The announcement came during a press conference at Saab's factory in Linköping, Sweden.

Kristersson said: "I welcome President Zelensky to Sweden and Linköping. Today, we have signed an important letter of intent that represents a step towards an extremely comprehensive agreement on the export of Gripen – probably 100-150 aircraft – for the build-up of a new and firm Ukrainian Air Force.

This proposed deal comes at a crucial time for Ukraine, which is urgently looking to enhance its capabilities amid the ongoing conflict with Russia".

Intriguingly, Zelensky said the first deliveries are scheduled to begin sometime in 2026 and may continue over the next 10 years.

Of course many questions remain, but the biggest is how will these very capable new jets be funded, with the Leonardo Raven AESA radar, and capable of firing the very capable BVRAAMs

In a statement, Swedish defence minister Pal Jonson said: "Ukraine has asked for 100-150 Gripen E and we are looking into how this can be financed."

Kristersson said he hoped 2026 will see a "more substantial implementation" of the agreement. On social media Zelenskyy said the first deliveries of Gripens to Ukraine "could take place in 2026". **Anita Roe**

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson shake hands after signing a letter of intent for between 100-150 Gripen Es on October 22. FMV

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More AW249s for Italy

Italian Army

IN A significant move to enhance its military capabilities, Italy has announced a follow-on order for 29 AW249 Fenice attack helicopters. Valued at €1.22bn, this procurement underscores the nation's commitment to modernising its armed forces and bolstering its defence strategy.

The details were revealed in documents submitted for parliamentary approval by the Italian defence minister in mid-October. Italy has already placed orders for 19 and now aims to increase its fleet of AW249 helicopters to a total of 48. Deliveries are expected to commence in 2027, with seven to eight helicopters scheduled to be delivered each year.

The early-build AW249s will include enhancements to ensure they meet the operational requirements of the Italian army. The deal includes a ten-year logistical support plan. A comprehensive training programme will also be implemented, complete with flight simulators, to ensure that personnel can operate the AW249 effectively.

The Italian government has made a significant investment of €4.64bn for the recapitalisation of its military, with the AW249s set to replace the legacy fleet of AW129 Mangusta helicopters.

Currently, four test units are in operation, comprising one prototype and three pre-serial helicopters. The AW249, weighing in at 8.3 tons, is built on the dynamic components and drivetrain of the AW149 transport helicopter. It features a 20mm gun, guided rockets, and Rafael Spike/ER air-to-surface missiles, making it a formidable addition to Italy's military capabilities.

While the development of the AW249 is an entirely Italian endeavour, the defence ministry has noted the potential for the successful completion of the programme to position national industry favourably within the international and European markets. This development brings optimism for future advancements, as technologies matured during the Fenice project are expected to contribute to upcoming international cooperation initiatives in the defence sector. **Roelof Jan Gort**

Jet Aviation to provide PC-24 for French Navy

ON OCTOBER 29, Jet Aviation acquired three PC-24 aircraft earmarked for leasing to the French Navy and will provide integrated sustainment support throughout the contract lifecycle.

Under the agreement with the Direction de la Maintenance Aéronautique (DMAé), Jet Aviation will offer a comprehensive maintenance and airworthiness management (CAMO) solution. This strategy is designed to maintain operational readiness and ensure mission success over the duration of the contract.

Jeremie Caillet, the president of Jet Aviation, stated: "Collaborating with DMAé and Pilatus on the selection and procurement of the new PC-24 fleet for the French Navy has been a significant endeavour. With over 55 years of maintenance expertise, including 35 years with governmental fleets, we are dedicated to delivering solutions meticulously tailored to meet specific operational requirements. We are excited to further strengthen our longstanding partnership with Pilatus to develop an acquisition and sustainment program that satisfies the unique operational and maintenance criteria of the French Navy." **Roelof Jan Gort**

Ex RAF C-130s for Turkey

Marshall Aerospace

A TURKEY Ministry of National Defence spokesperson, Rear Admiral Zeki Akturk, told a press conference on October 16, 2025, that the purchase of former RAF Hercules transport aircraft had been finalised. He explained the C-130Js "… will be gradually incorporated into our air force inventory following the completion of maintenance and modernisation in the United Kingdom under the signed contract".

Four days later, Marshall Aerospace announced it had secured a contract from the ministry to support the fleet. The company has signed a multi-year agreement to cover the service entry of the 12 C-130Js and their sustainment once they are operational in Turkey. The deal also includes scheduled maintenance and the provision of spares, and the tooling required. The company will provide training, so that Turkey can build up an indigenous capability to support the aircraft. The maintenance and upkeep of the C-130J aircraft will be carried out once training is completed. It has not been confirmed if this support will be provided by the Türk Hava Kuvvetleri's (Turkish Air Force, TuAF) own maintenance organisation or by local industry, which includes Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI), responsible for upgrading the 'legacy' models currently in service.

Turkey has operated Hercules since December 1964, when the first of five C-130Es was delivered for 222. Filo 'Alev' at Erkilet-Kayseri. A further three C-130Es were received between September 1971 and February 1974, while from March 1991 to August 1992 seven former US Air Force C-130Bs were delivered, one of which returned to the United States in May 2002. The fleet was augmented by the arrival of six C-130Es acquired from Saudi Arabia in 2010, while a local avionics upgrade programme, managed by TAI and known as Erciyes, was implemented on all the surviving aircraft. The upgraded Hercules became C-130BMs or 'EMs, depending on the baseline model of the airframe. Around 19 of the aircraft remain available to the Turkish Air Force.

Turkish interest in the former RAF C-130Js first came to light in late 2024, when it was reported Ankara would acquire the transports as part of a $740m deal. Once in service with Turkey, the C-130Js are initially expected to augment the C-130BM/EM fleet and remove some of the burden on the ten Airbus A400Ms also operated. **David Willis**

Qatari F-15s to train in Idaho

US SECRETARY of War Pete Hegseth announced that a contingent of Qatari Emeri Air Force F-15QAs will conduct training from Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho. Plans for the basing arrangement date back to 2022, when a final environmental assessment report was published. It detailed the bed-down of 12 F-15QAs at Mountain Home. The Idaho base is home to the USAF's 366th Fighter Wing, which operates around 50 F-15E Strike Eagles.

The base has also hosted a squadron of 20 Republic of Singapore Air Force F-15SG fighters since 2008. According to the USAF: "The establishment of an enduring location for Qatari F-15 aircraft at Mountain Home Air Force Base provides Qatar with strategic flexibility to operate and sustain their advanced fighter aircraft." The facility "will provide advanced training opportunities and foster combined operational readiness". Under the terms of the ten-year agreement, construction costs associated with the facilities, which include a squadron operations building and hangars, will be borne by the Qatari government. **Tom Kaminski**

USAF/DVIDS/ Airmen 1st Class Thomas Hansford

Sea Venom reaches IOC

THE ROYAL Navy has declared initial operating capability (IOC) for the Sea Venom missile. Achieved during Operation Highmast, the Carrier Strike Group mission to the Indo-Pacific, the anti-ship munition can now be deployed with Wildcat helicopters on front line duties.

A Wildcat can carry up to four Sea Venoms, giving it the ability to strike multiple targets in a single sortie or unleashing a salvo against a single target. It is an advanced weapon, which can utilise an 'operator-in-the-loop', who can make real-time adjustments mid-flight to control the trajectory of the missile. Wildcat is also equipped to carry the lightweight Martlet missile for taking out boat swarms and smaller vessels.

Four Wildcats HMA2s on deployment from 815 Naval Air Squadron are armed with the Sea Venom, spread across the CSG on carrier HMS *Prince of Wales* (R09), type 45 destroyer HMS *Dauntless* and Norwegian frigate HNoMS *Roald Amundsen*.

815 NAS
7 FLT
SMR
RESCUE

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Commanding Officer of 815 NAS, Commander James Woods, said: "The introduction of Sea Venom is a step-change in our combat power. It delivers a lethal combination of precision, reach and flexibility that allows us to strike decisively against a wide spectrum of threats in the maritime, coastal, and land domains. Most importantly, it gives us the ability to neutralise those threats at range. This is a transformational capability for the Fleet Air Arm and ensures that we are ready to defend and protect NATO and Allied interests at home and abroad."

Sea Venom will also provide the long-range armament of the Future Anti-Surface Guided Weapon (FASGW) programme, with the short-range capability delivered by the Martlet missile. **Dylan Ecklund**

Germany orders 20 more Eurofighters

EUROFIGHTER
TRANCHE 5
31+89

Eurofighter

AIRBUS DEFENCE and Space has announced that the Luftwaffe has signed a contract to acquire 20 new Tranche 5 Eurofighters. They will be built at Airbus's assembly line in Manching, near Munich, with the first aircraft scheduled for delivery to the Luftwaffe in 2031 and deliveries concluding in 2034.

The tranche 5s will be equipped with the latest sensors, including the new electronic E-Scan radar, also known as the European Common Radar System (ECRS) Mk1 active electronically scanned array radar. New electronic warfare capabilities will be added with the integration of the Saab Arexis sensor suite and the Northrop Grumman AARGM-ER, which will also appear on the 15 Eurofighter EKs ordered earlier as part of Tranche 4/Quadriga.

While it was initially thought that these would specialise in electronic attack, the Luftwaffe has stressed they will be used in all roles. The organisation plans to keep the Eurofighter within its arsenal until the 2060s.

Potential Eurofighter for Portugal?

AIRBUS SIGNED a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Portugal's Aeronautics, Space and Defence Cluster (AED) on October 27, to advance the Eurofighter Typhoon as a replacement for the F-16 fighter fleet. Together they will launch a series of studies aiming to create a proposition for the decision makers when it comes to Portugal's next front line fighter.

AED President José Neves said: "Airbus is a leading international company with a longstanding relationship with the AED. This MOU strengthens international co-operation and positions for Portuguese industry in global value chains, fostering a more collaborative, innovative sector that is prepared for technologically demanding programmes.

"With this partnership, AED reaffirms its commitment to promoting bridges between Portugal and key international players, thereby creating economic, scientific and strategic value for the country."

Portugal had been considering an order of fifth-generation F-35 fighters, but after US President Donald Trump's statements against NATO, they decided to reopen the tender.

Although Força Aérea Portuguesa's (FAP) fleet of around 24 F-16s have undergone several upgrades, the country needs greater reliability and modern air defence capabilities, having participated in several NATO missions.

296 more F-35s

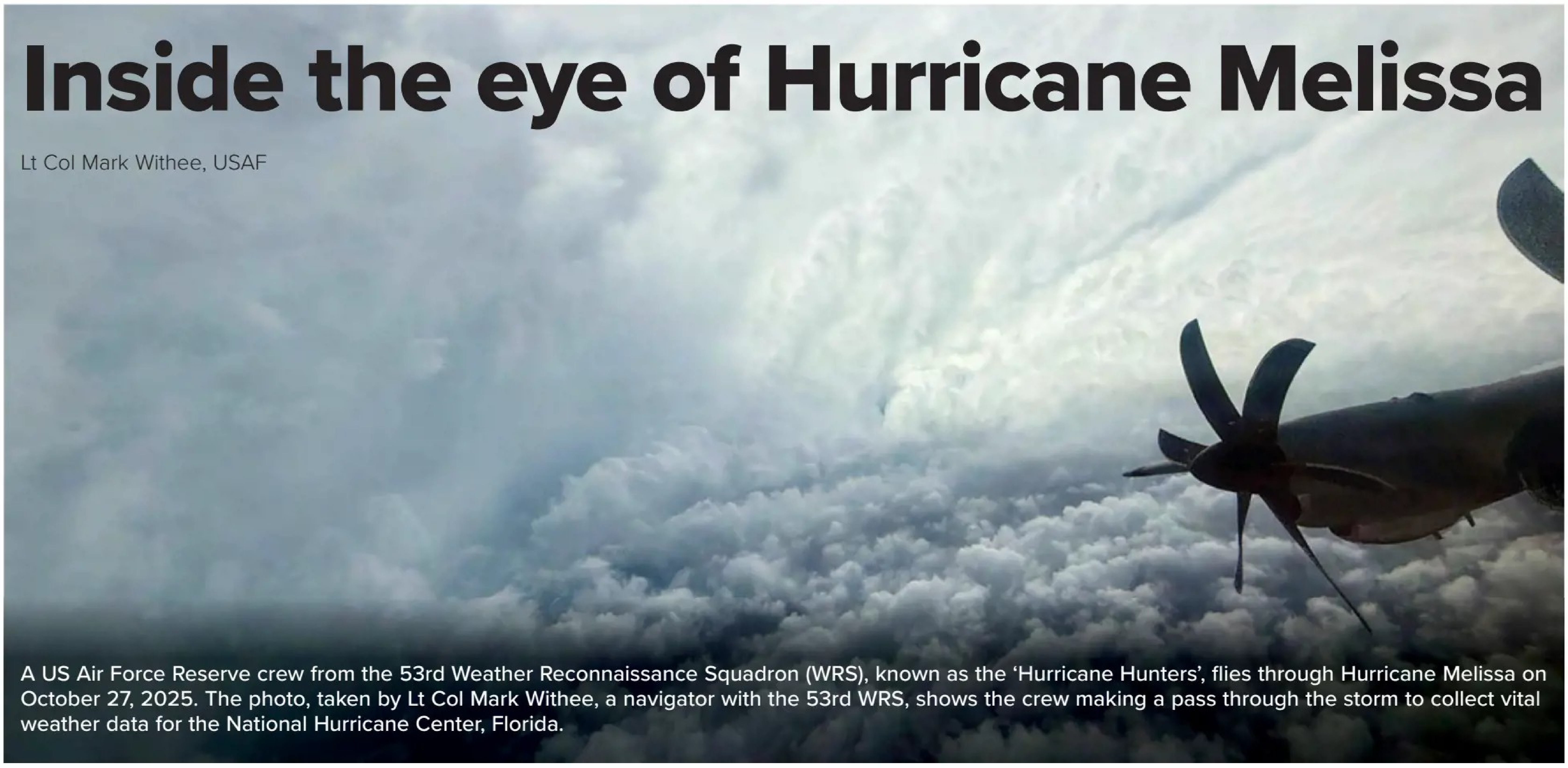
Mark Lynham

LOCKHEED MARTIN and the F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) have reached final agreement on lots 18-19 for the production and delivery of up to 296 F-35s, in a deal worth $24.3bn. The production contract adds jets for the US services, international partners and foreign military sales (FMS) customers. Deliveries are scheduled to begin in 2026.

Chauncey McIntosh, vice-president and general manager of the F-35 Lightning II programme at Lockheed Martin, said: "The F-35 lot 18-19 contract represents continued confidence in the most affordable and capable fighter aircraft in production today. We are proud to support our customers and further solidify the F-35's role in enabling peace through strength."

Lot 18 deliveries will go to all three US services, as well as overseas operators of the fifth-generation stealth fighter. Lot 19 orders include 40 F-35As for the USAF, 12 F-35Bs and eight F-35Cs for the US Marine Corps and nine F-35Cs for the US Navy, as well as a further 13 F-35As and two F-35Bs for programme partners, and 52 F-35As and 12 F-35Bs for FMS customers.

Inside the eye of Hurricane Melissa


Lt Col Mark Withee, USAF

A US Air Force Reserve crew from the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS), known as the 'Hurricane Hunters', flies through Hurricane Melissa on October 27, 2025. The photo, taken by Lt Col Mark Withee, a navigator with the 53rd WRS, shows the crew making a pass through the storm to collect vital weather data for the National Hurricane Center, Florida.

By Rod Simpson

Gulfstream launches G300

GULFSTREAM AEROSPACE has just launched the new G300, a development of its super midsize G280 business jet. Upgrades include ten new windows based on those of the larger G500 and with upgraded avionics based on the Honeywell Epic 2 'Harmony' system replacing the G280's Pro Line Fusion flight deck. The first aircraft is nearing completion prior to a maiden flight at the Tel Aviv factory of Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), with a further two test aircraft to follow. The G300 will have a 3,600nm range at Mach 0.80, a 45,000ft ceiling and two cabin areas with capacity for up to ten passengers. The G280 and previous G250 were IAI models acquired by Gulfstream, with more than 300 completed to date. **Rod Simpson**

Gulfstream

Carbon Cub breaks altitude record

Cub Crafters

ON OCTOBER 28, a CubCrafters Carbon Cub UL soared past previous records when it climbed to a verified altitude of 37,609ft with Jon Kotwicki at the controls. This took place over the California coast and surpassed the previous Cub-type aircraft record of 30,203ft made by Caro Bailey in a PA-18 Piper Cub in 1951.

"This achievement exemplifies everything we stand for: innovation, craftsmanship and the courage to push limits," said Brad Damm, VP of CubCrafters. "The original vision of Jim Richmond, the founder of CubCrafters, was to take the Super Cub, considered the workhorse of backcountry aviation, and make it better. I think Jim would be the first to congratulate our team on what was achieved on this flight"

DA-20I to Europe

Katana
D-EVLF

Rod Simpson

SEVERE AIRLINE industry pressure to recruit newly trained flight deck crews has prompted Diamond Aircraft to bring back its iconic all-composite Katana two-seater. This will be welcomed by flight schools, which have long valued the qualities of the Katana.

The new DA20i Katana will be powered by a Rotax 912 iSc3 engine and have an advanced touchscreen Garmin 500TXi cockpit. The DV20 was originally launched in 1991 and was discontinued at the Wiener Neustadt factory in 2012. Diamond then concentrated on the four-seat DA40 and the DA42 and DA62 twins. Production of the DA20-C1 in Canada will also continue. **Rod Simpson**

Harrier on display at new home

Tony Sacketos

HAWKER SIDDELEY Harrier T.4 XZ415 has been delivered to the California Science Center in Los Angeles. It had previously been housed at the Western Museum of Flight in Torrance, California.

Built at Kingston upon Thames, it first flew on January 20, 1976, and was officially adopted into the RAF two years later and used to train new VTOL pilots.

On arrival at its new home, work began on lifting the disassembled jet off the ground and hoisting it through an opening in the attraction's Samuel Oschin Air and Space Center. With that phase complete, the contractors set to work reassembling the Harrier, rigging the aircraft to be suspended from the ceiling.

Meteor makes way for Skyhawk replica

GLOSTER METEOR F.4 C-095, previously a gate guardian outside the Argentinian Air Force (FAA) headquarters, has been relocated to the country's Joint Aerospace Command centre, also in Buenos Aires. Before its transfer and unveiling, C-095 underwent a cosmetic restoration to preserve its historical significance as one of the 100 Meteors purchased by Argentina after World War Two. Entering service in 1949, C-095 set two altitude records in South America, eventually reaching 46,260ft. It was retired on December 30, 1970.

The Meteor has been replaced outside the FAA buildings by a replica of Douglas A-4C Skyhawk C-301. The machine it depicts was flown by 1st Lt José Daniel Vázquez, shot down during the attack on HMS *Invincible* on March 30, 1982. The Skyhawk replica is the centrepiece of a new memorial that salutes FAA pilots and personnel who lost their lives during the Falklands conflict.

FAA

Ramiro Piacenza

Thunderbolt crash site under investigation

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL recovery is taking place in North Essex to investigate the crash site of a USAAF P-47 Thunderbolt, which was downed on January 26, 1944, with its young pilot, 2/Lt Lester Lowry, still on board. Led by Cotswold Archaeology, the operation aims to locate evidence from the aircraft and, if possible, recover remains related to the pilot for repatriation to the US. Lowry of the 487th FS, 352nd FG was lost on a training flight from RAF Bodney, Norfolk. Leading archaeologist Sam Wilson said: "This is painstaking, highly respectful work. Our goal is to document the crash scientifically, responsibly recover any evidence and support the mission to account for missing US personnel."

Cotswold Archaeology

Historic Airacobra acquired by US museum

A BELL P-39D Airacobra 41-6951 has been added to The Fagen Fighters WWII Museum at Granite Falls in Minnesota.

The aircraft has a remarkable history, having been the first US-operated fighter to land on New Guinea during World War Two, on April 5, 1942. Named *Erminie* after the wife of its pilot, Lt Charles Falletta, 41-6951 is believed to have engaged the enemy several times while serving from Port Moresby.

On May 1, the aircraft was abandoned on the remote Cape York peninsula following an emergency landing in bad weather. It was eventually recovered in 1972 by the Cairns Aircraft Recovery Team and preserved for decades by Australian collector Syd Beck. It had been returned to static display condition by 1988 and was on show as part of Syd's Mareeba-based collection for decades.

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum

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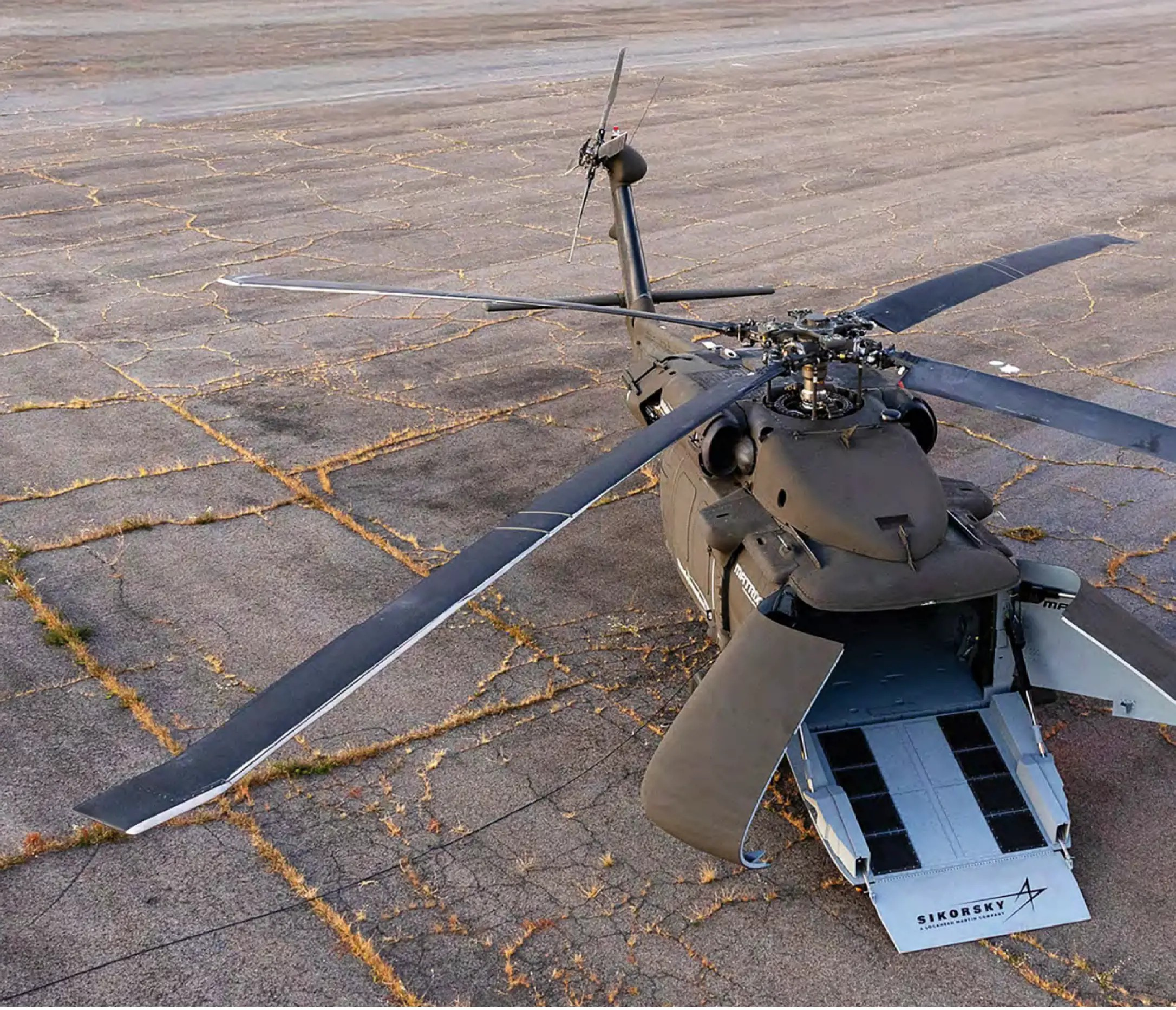


NO MAN'S LAND?

Sikorsky has unveiled its new S-70UAS U-Hawk, an unmanned aerial system (UAS) derived from the UH-60L Black Hawk, designed to operate without a pilot

▲ Sikorsky has replaced the cockpit area for clamshell doors to provide 25% more cargo capacity Lockheed Martin / Sikorsky

Sikorsky introduced the S-70UAS U-Hawk at the AUSA 2025 conference on October 13. It is a significant innovation that repurposes an older Black Hawk helicopter into a large drone. Currently, there is a prototype of this Group 5 UAS, with flight testing planned for next year. Erskine 'Ramsey' Bentley, the director of strategy and business development for Sikorsky Advanced Programmes, explained: "Essentially, we have taken a UH-60L Black Hawk and, by utilising our MATRIX autonomy system, transformed this aircraft into a UAS."

Bentley said the concept for the S-70UAS developed in collaboration with US Army leaders during the previous year's AUSA conference – the annual event for the Association of the United States Army. Within a year of this collaboration, Sikorsky created a prototype using internal funds, as the aircraft is not part of any current Army requirements.

The prototype was developed from a UH-60L model that Sikorsky acquired back from the US Army. This development aligns with the Army's ongoing effort to phase out UH-60L models as part of a broader aviation modernisation initiative. The conversion process required extensive technical expertise and rigorous testing to ensure the S-70UAS U-Hawk's reliability and performance, resulting in a robust unmanned aerial system.

In addition to assault missions, Bentley highlighted that the U-Hawk can also perform cargo missions, showcasing its versatility. The aircraft can accommodate up to four Joint Modular Intermodal Containers (JMICs), compared with two in manned Black Hawks, can carry 7,000lbs internally and transport 9,000lbs using an external cargo hook. It is also designed to hold a HIMARS pod of six rockets in its centre or two Naval strike missiles.

Regarding operation, the S-70UAS can deploy more than 1600nm or operate for up to 14 hours without needing to refuel, can be controlled via a tablet by a "minimally trained" operator, said Igor Cherepinsky, director of Sikorsky Innovations. This intuitive control system empowers operators to adjust the level of control for the aircraft based on the mission requirements.

Cherepinsky said: "For instance, if you instruct the aircraft to fly from Airport A to Airport B and it recognises that it's in civil airspace, it will follow the appropriate routes and regulations. However, if it detects it is in military airspace, it will respond accordingly." The system offers adjustable autonomy, allowing operators to determine how much control they wish to maintain over the aircraft, ensuring its safety and reliability for various military and civilian operations.

Looking ahead, Sikorsky executives said more insights will emerge following completion of flight-testing next year. The US Army is currently identified as the primary customer, yet the S-70UAS can also serve other branches and civilian organisations for missions such as humanitarian aid.

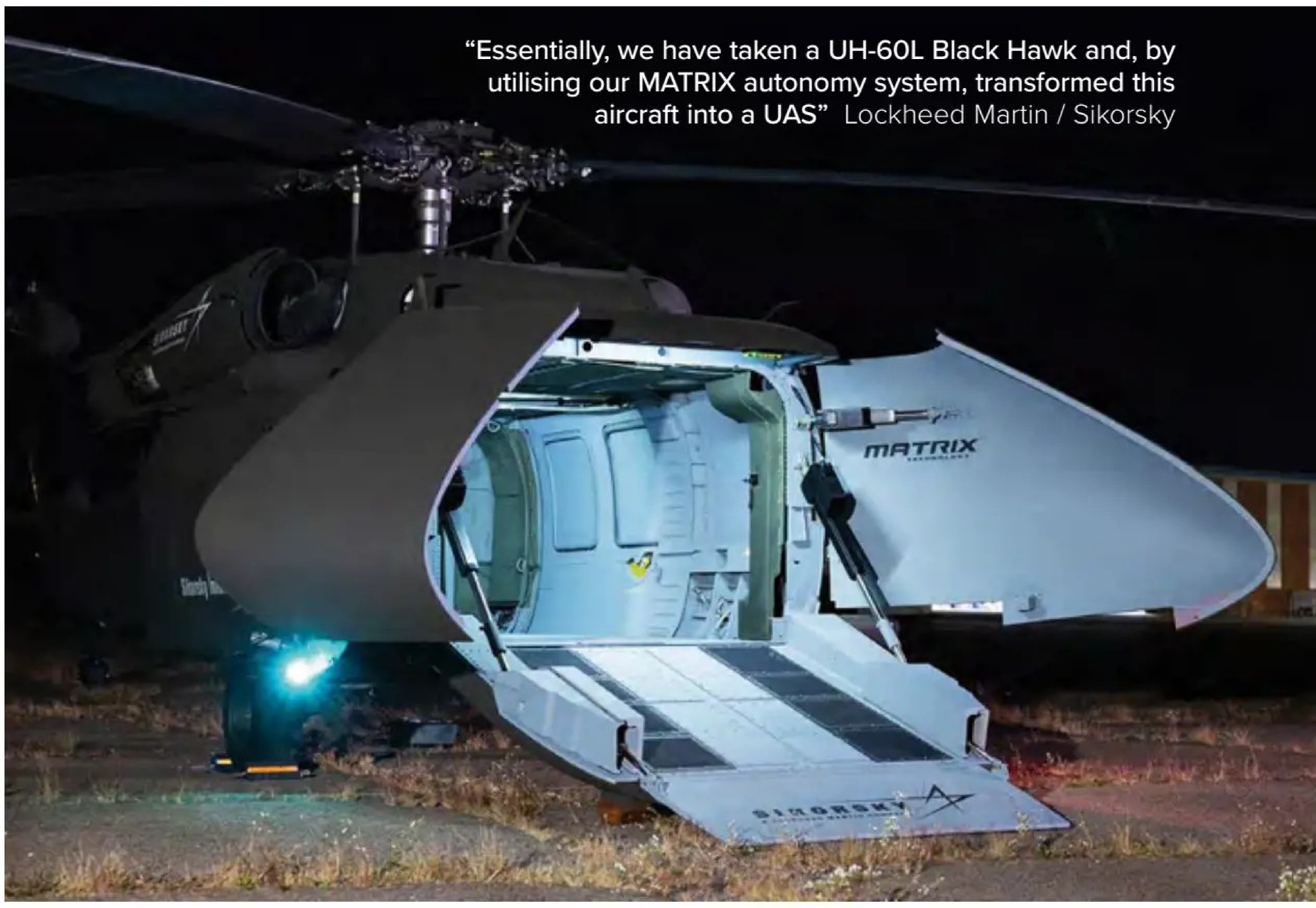
Bentley said: "We envision this aircraft supporting contested logistics missions across the Army, as well as being utilised by international customers. It could also play a key role in disaster relief and various civilian applications, including wildfire suppression."

In the long term, Cherepinsky said, converting the M variant of the UH-60 Black Hawk into a model like the S-70UAS is a possibility, depending on future developments. **Roelof Jan Gort**

The Army has previously tested pilotless Black Hawks through a US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) programme called ALIAS. However, Bentley emphasised that the U-Hawk features a fully modified airframe designed specifically for remote flight operations.

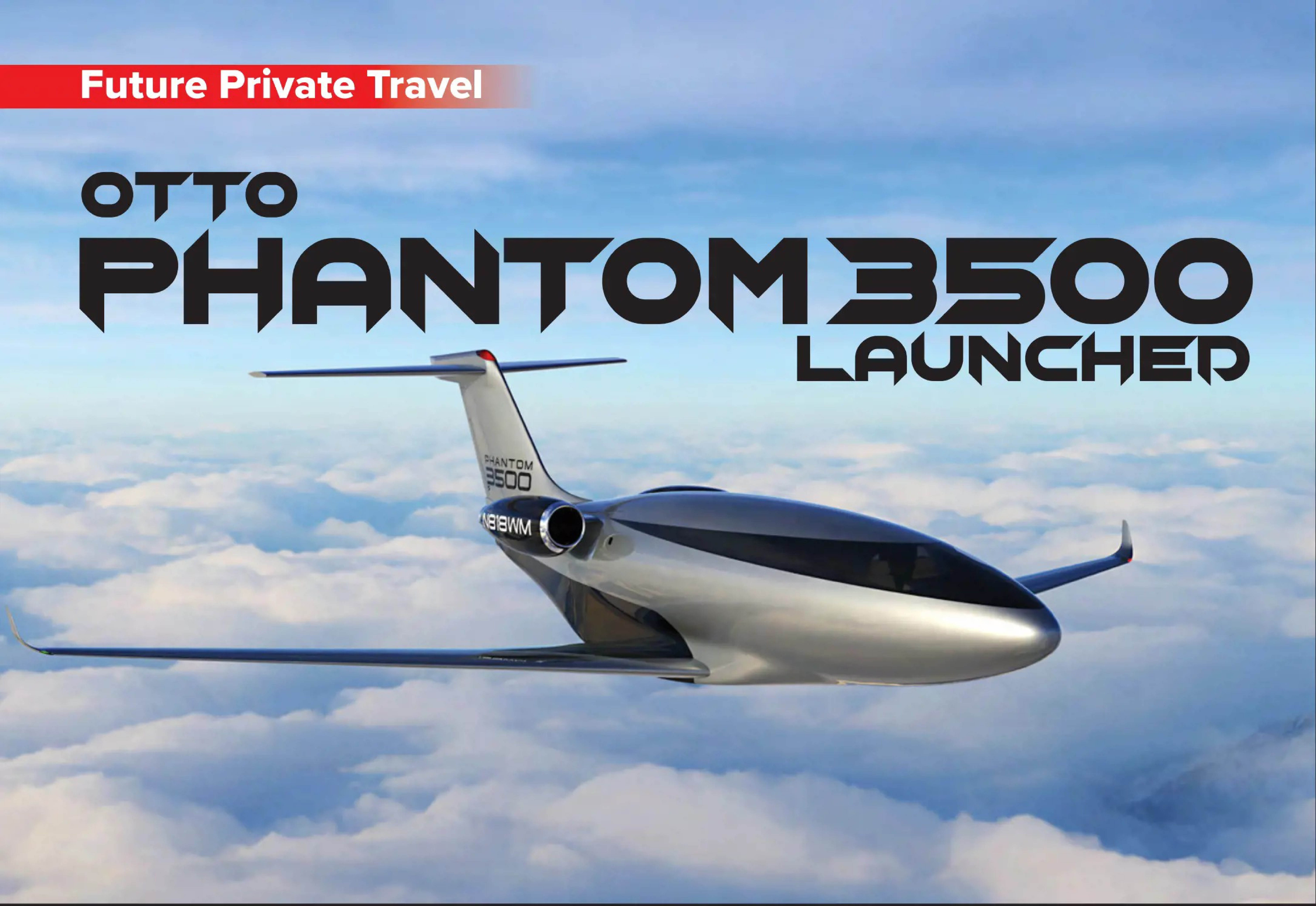
Sikorsky engineers have "completely redesigned" the front end of the UH-60L by removing the cockpit and incorporating clamshell doors and a ramp allowing 25% more cargo space. This design allows the entire cabin and cockpit area to be used for logistics or mission support operations. For instance, soldiers can drive uncrewed ground vehicles (UGVs) through the front of the aircraft and load them in the back. The U-Hawk can carry approximately 40 to 50 different launch effects capabilities in a "quiver".

Bentley described a potential scenario for the U-Hawk: "As the Army conducts an air assault, envision the U-Hawk flying ahead of the soldiers. As it approaches the landing zone, it can dispense launch effects from the sides of the aircraft. Once it lands, it can disembark the UGV before departing, allowing this to happen before any soldiers arrive on the ground."



"Essentially, we have taken a UH-60L Black Hawk and, by utilising our MATRIX autonomy system, transformed this aircraft into a UAS" Lockheed Martin / Sikorsky

OTTO PHANTOM 3500 LAUNCHED



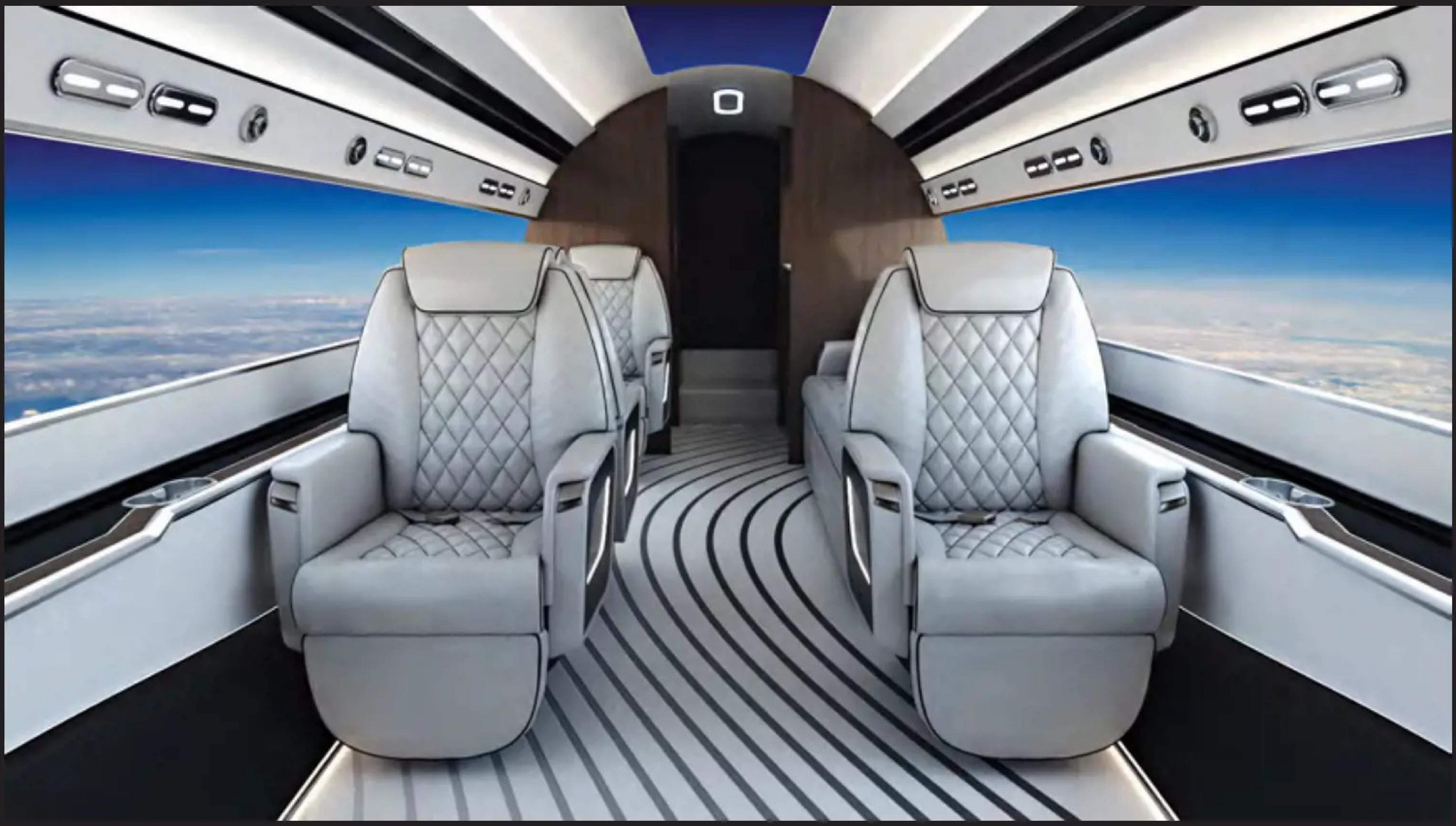
▲ An artist's rendering of the Phantom 3500 All images Otto Aerospace

Traditional business jets have always featured all-metal monocoque construction but Otto Aerospace of Fort Worth, Texas, has new ideas for the design of its revolutionary new Phantom 3500 project.

The Phantom 3500 has been engineered to redefine traditional principles of efficiency, range and performance. This laminar flow design falls into the same category as Embraer's Praetor 500 and features all-carbon-fibre composite construction. Otto claims it will fly at transonic speeds while delivering exceptionally low fuel burn and much reduced emissions and operating costs due to its ultra-low drag airframe.

According to the company, compared with competitors, the aircraft's weight will be reduced by half due to its much lighter airframe, smaller wings, engines and the ultra-smooth surfaces to maximise its aerodynamic efficiency.

The nine passengers will be very comfortable in the extra-large 800 cubic foot cabin, which has 6ft 5in headroom to meet the needs of taller



▶ The interior design of the Phantom 3500. Instead of traditional windows, Otto aerospace plan to add a SuperNatural Vision system

▲ The SuperNatural Vision system will use cameras placed on the exterior of the aircraft

passengers, but for aerodynamic efficiency the aircraft has no cabin windows. This principle means that the structural design issues of conventional windows are avoided, with resulting low weight and manufacturing simplicity and no need for the normal collection of rivets and panel lines. However, one must question whether this will make the interior claustrophobic.

Otto's answer is the company's "SuperNatural Vision" system with digital cabin wall made up of 72-inch HD screens and ceiling panels displaying a view of the outdoors, managed by high-resolution cameras on the outside of the aircraft.

The Phantom 3500, which is expected to have a unit price of $19.5m, will have two rear-mounted 3,600 lb Williams FJ44 turbofan engines and a maximum range of 3,500nm. It will have a basic operating weight of 11,700lbs and maximum take-off weight of 19,000lbs. The first of four-development aircraft is scheduled to take a maiden flight in 2027 and be in service from 2030 following certification under FAA Part 23.

The company claims the Phantom 3500 is in a new category of aviation that combines speed, range, luxury and sustainability. They also claim the Phantom 3500 will burn 60% less fuel than other aircraft using current technology and will have significantly lower emissions than its competitors. The 3500 will have a 51,000ft ceiling, which according to Otto, the 3500 will be able to ascend to in just 28 minutes. A wide range of airports will be accessible due to the balanced field length of less than 3,500ft. Overall, the aircraft will be able to reach transonic speeds while maintaining ultra-low drag, delivering faster travel, all without compromising on fuel efficiency.

On the flight deck one can expect the aircraft to benefit from next-generation avionics and a focus on low crew workload.

For the four-test aircraft, Otto says it plans to build them as close as possible to the final production configuration. The company is setting up a 1,000,000sq ft production factory at Cecil Airport in Jacksonville, Florida, supported by a $515m grant from the State of Florida and featuring the latest robotic technology.

First orders

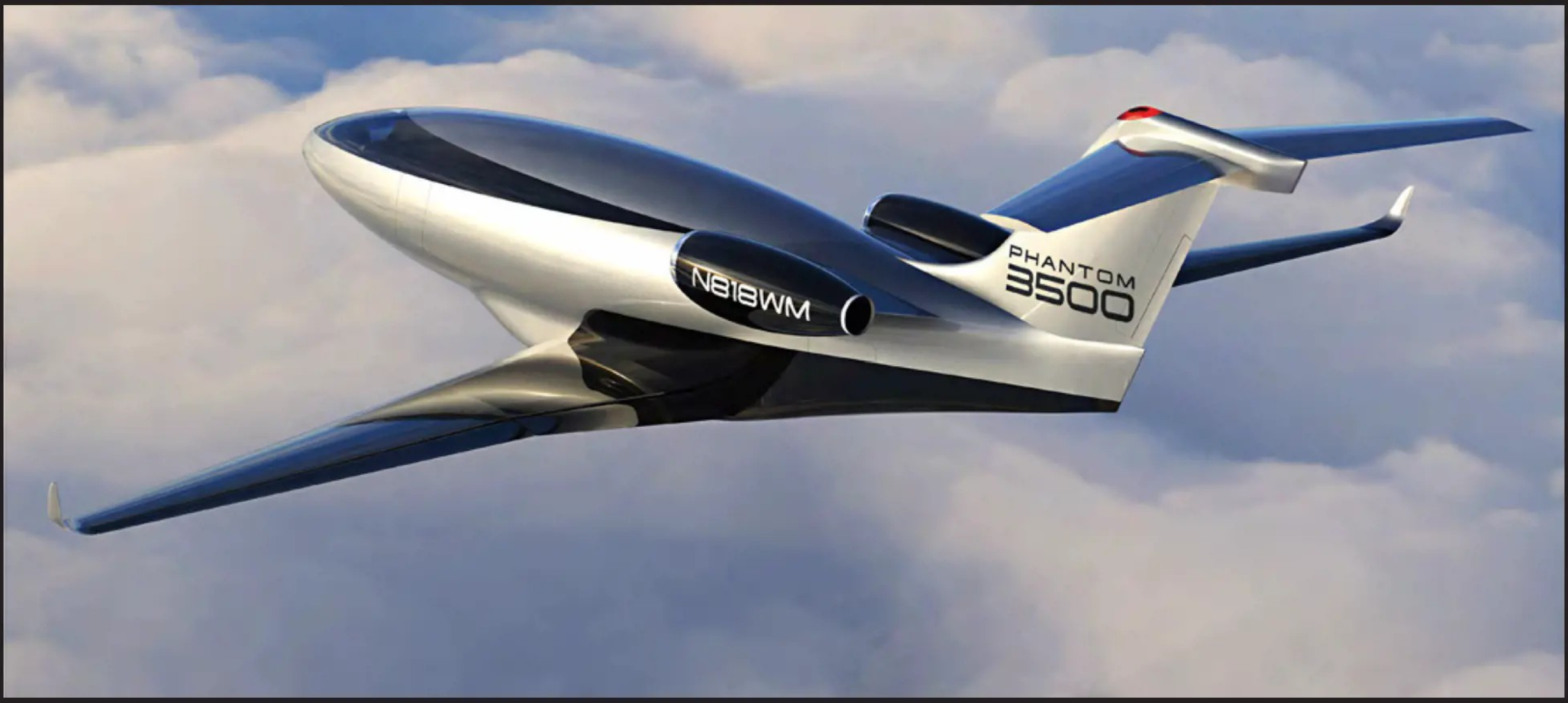
One of the largest business aviation companies in the world, Flexjet, has already declared its support with a firm order for 300 Phantom 3500s along with further options; deliveries are expected to begin in 2030. It currently operates more than 300 business jets ranging from the Phenom 300 and Praetor 500/600, along with Bombardier Challengers and Gulfstreams.

Regarding the order, Flexjet chairman Kenn Ricci said:"For 30 years, Flexjet has led through innovation opposed to imitation, introducing tomorrow's standards, not reacting to yesterday's expectations. The Phantom 3500 exemplifies that approach perfectly, marking a bold step into a future where an aircraft's efficiency and sustainability stand alongside speed, comfort and range as defining standards. This collaboration with Otto Aerospace further affirms our leadership role in delivering to fractional aircraft owners the future of luxury private aviation."

Without doubt, the Phantom breaks the traditional mould, but it remains to be seen whether the market is ready for its revolutionary design. AN

Rod Simpson

▼ Four test aircraft are due to be built. First flight is expected in 2027 and deliveries from 2030



Back to Business

Emma Lewis embarked on the all-new short-haul business class launch by SAS from London Heathrow to Copenhagen.

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) unveiled its brand-new business class offering on October 1 on all intra-European flights, ending more than a decade without a premium short-haul cabin. The move shifts away from the SAS Plus model launched in 2013 – an enhanced economy product with benefits such as lounge access, complimentary snacks and fast-track security, but retained standard economy seating.

Paul Verhagen, chief commercial officer at SAS, said: "With the reintroduction of European Business Class, we are delivering the premium experience expected of a full-service European airline, backed by our focus on operational excellence and on-time performance. The strong early interest shows that our premium strategy resonates with customers."

Why re-launch now?

SAS has reintroduced its European business class to meet rising demand for premium travel, boost its competitive edge and better align with SkyTeam alliance standards. The former 'SAS Plus' offering provided some perks but lacked the clear distinction many premium travellers expect. The revamped cabin includes a separate forward section, blocked middle seats for added comfort, upgraded dining with reusable tableware and priority services like lounge access – all designed to deliver a more defined and elevated experience.

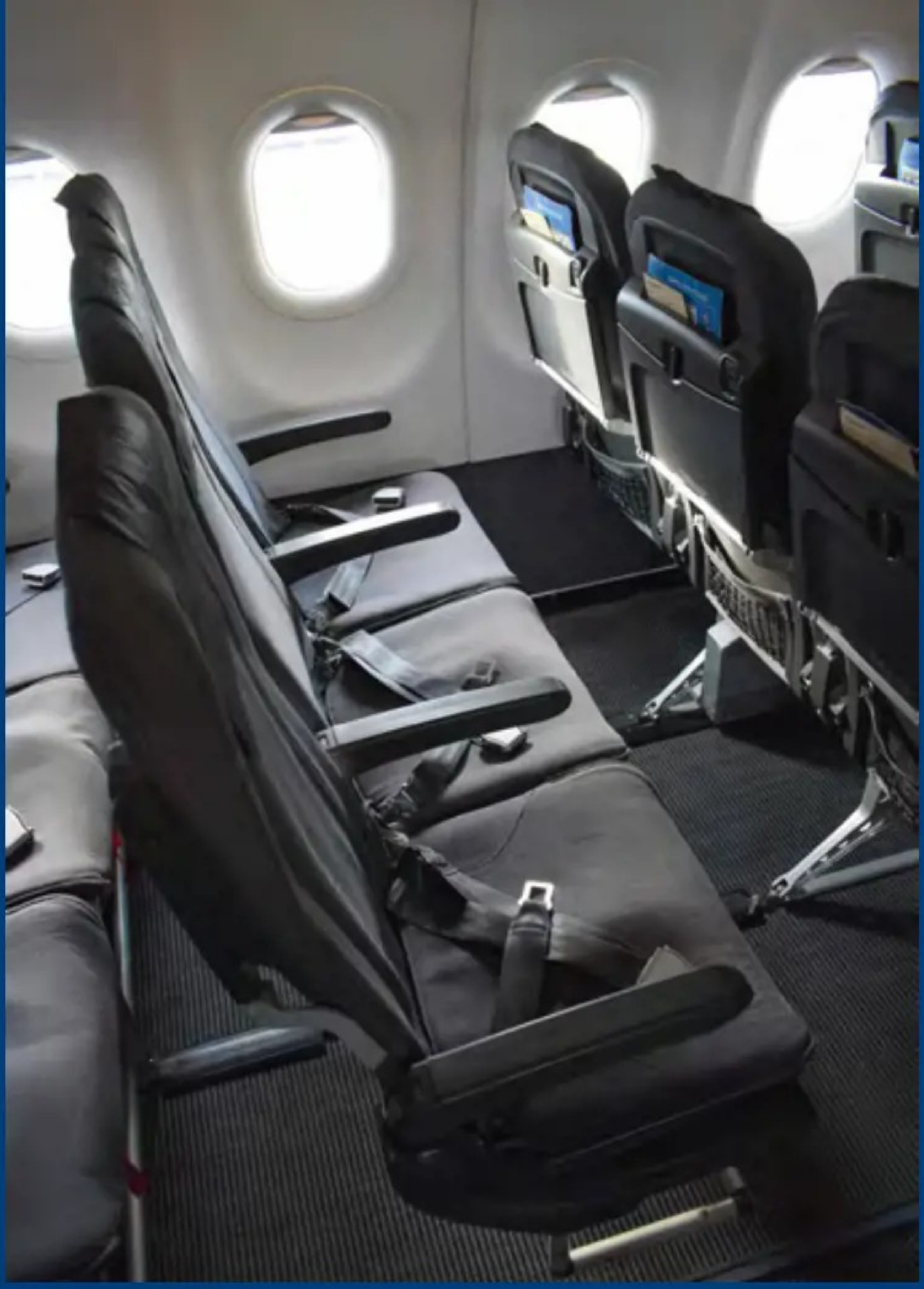
The journey begins

The return business class flights cost £471 in total and, for my trip, there was an early evening outbound on October 2 and a mid-afternoon return on the 5th. Incidentally, BA offered similar flight times on those dates but at £542; a £71 saving.

Online check-in opens 24 hours before departure, which is when you choose your seat for free (unless you pay the £17 early seat selection fee). Business class has a dedicated bag drop area plus access to fast-track security, which is particularly handy at busy times.

SAS
Scandinavian
EI-SIV

▼ **EI-SIV taxies to stand at London Heathrow. SAS has 67 of the Airbus single aisle type in its fleet** All images, Emma Lewis



◀ SAS's new short-haul business class seating, featuring unbookable middle seats for added space, comfort and privacy on regional routes

The new SAS business class baggage allowance is two 32kg check-in bags per passenger. It also permits one small bag to fit under the seat in front of you, and a cabin trolley to go in the overhead locker (maximum 8kg).

The Lufthansa lounge

There is not a dedicated SAS lounge at Heathrow T2 at present, but SAS business class passengers get complimentary use of the Lufthansa lounge.

Although very busy, there was a decent mix of seating plus plenty of individual electric sockets and phone-charging points. There are also several private cubicles for quiet working or to make phone calls away from noise. The free Wi-Fi was a little slow – again perhaps because it was busy – but adequate and easy to connect.

Despite the hordes, the lounge and toilets were clean, with numerous staff clearing tables. Plenty of fresh hot and cold food was available, with a wide choice of sandwiches, wraps, salad, cake, fruit, meats and cheeses, plus wine, beer, spirits and soft drinks on tap.

Boarding

Boarding began on time and was done by group number. Business class boards as Group 2 (EuroBonus Gold and Diamond members are Group 1) so you're one of the first on. While this was strictly adhered to by the gate team at Heathrow, sadly it rather fell flat at CPH – more on that later.

The cabin crew were very friendly and welcomed us during boarding. The briefing also included what we could expect to eat and drink as business class passengers and what order things would happen in.

As expected, the flight was operated on SAS Connect's stalwart Airbus A320neo, refreshed with extra legroom in the business class cabin and unbookable 'blocked' middle seats – a big upgrade from the old Plus model, which had the same 3+3 layout as economy.

One point to note is that SAS has opted to keep the middle seats in business class clear, but unbookable. However, with BA Club Europe, middle seats are physically blocked by a tray area between the armrests. There are pros and cons to both set-ups. For example, if you're travelling SAS with a companion or child you can choose to sit next to them or simply lift the armrests and stretch out. However, on BA the middle seat acts as an extra tray table, so although you can't stretch out as much as you can with SAS, it is extra space for putting down drinks, books and other essentials.

Seat space

Having settled into window seat 4F, I was pleasantly surprised by the generous leg room (31" pitch). At 5ft 8" (171cm) my knees were still a good two to three inches from the seat in front, and the tray table could easily fit a laptop. There's also a USB charger in the back of the headrest in front.

Wi-Fi

SAS's fleet averages just four years old, and most A320neos come equipped with Wi-Fi – both my flights included. While the connection worked, there was some confusion: the SAS website states that Wi-Fi is free in business class, yet on both legs I was prompted to pay – either €4.90 or 1,000 EuroBonus points. There didn't seem to be a way around it. Hopefully, just a teething issue.

Food and drinks service

Drinks service began soon after departure. Business class passengers received individual three-course menus, with a generous selection of drinks – soft or alcoholic, wine and excellent Charles Heidsieck champagne. Drinks came with ice and lemon, served in real SAS-branded glasses, not plastic cups. Full-size 330ml cans, too.

Meals followed shortly. The catch? No choice – just one option each for starter, main and dessert. Alternative meals for specific dietary requirements need to be requested 24 hours ahead – otherwise, you might go hungry.

Despite the lack of choice, the meals on both my journeys were very acceptable. On the Heathrow to Copenhagen leg, it was a cheese selection with fig and honey compote, followed by smoked duck with leeks, parsley-pumpkin seed pesto, and watercress

▼ Business class meals on SAS short-haul now feature fresh Nordic flavours and upgraded presentation, part of the carrier's enhanced regional premium offering

Scandinavian
Scandinavian

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◀ Lounges are being upgraded across key hubs, with refreshed interiors, expanded dining options and more space

USB
USB
EMPOWER

▶ Business class seats include a convenient USB charging point located in the seatback ahead, keeping devices powered throughout the flight

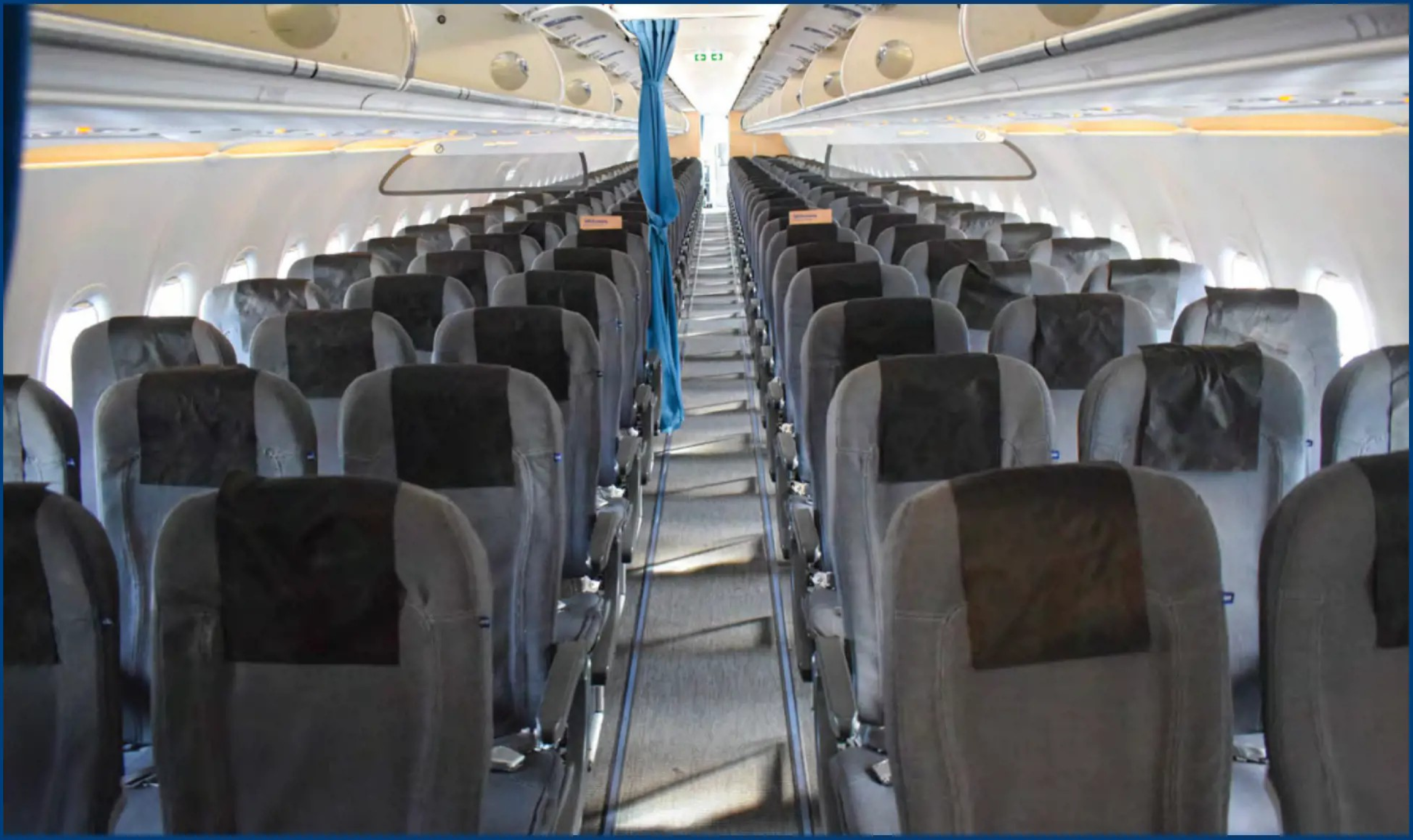
and buckwheat lemon cream. Dessert was a chocolate and cherry shortbread.

Around half-an-hour before landing, meal trays were cleared away promptly. All in all, a comfortable flight with a noticeably superior feel and friendly, attentive service.

The return journey

As a comparison, I decided to book my return flight from Copenhagen to Heathrow in the new business class cabin, too. It gave me the chance to sample the official SAS business class lounge at CPH, as well as the check-in and boarding process, from the airline's main Scandinavian hub.

Check-in at Copenhagen was once again quick, as was the complimentary fast-track security. Unlike at Heathrow, there is a dedicated SAS lounge at Copenhagen – again complimentary for business class passengers. A crisply modern yet comfortable affair, it was very busy but still well-stocked and



▼ A look down the aisle of the A320neo and the 3-3 configuration clean. Again, there was a good variety of Scandi-inspired nibbles, including pastries, meats, cheeses, cakes, breads, salads and pasta. Soft drinks, wines, beers and spirits were all available to help yourself. There were several quiet work areas with desks and sockets, plus three conference rooms, showers, a pet zone and a children's play area. I noticed a sign advertising a brand-new SAS lounge arriving in summer 2027, offering "more comfort, more space and an even better experience". Stay tuned.

Regrouping

This is where things got interesting, and a tad more chaotic.

Boarding at CPH was around 15 minutes delayed – not the end of the world, although there was nowhere to sit so everyone bunched together standing outside the gate. However, when the door finally opened it was a free-for-all with passengers rushing forward at once. No group order or priority boarding here.

Once on board, the service was generally prompt and friendly, although slightly less attentive than before. The complimentary drinks weren't as free-flowing, no alcohol was offered until after the meal and the premium feel had slipped slightly. A little underwhelming, but hopefully things will standardise more over time.

The million-dollar question: Is SAS short-haul business class worth it?

In short, yes – with a few caveats.

While it doesn't yet offer the polish or consistency of BA's Club Europe, for example, it comes in at a slightly lower price point and delivers a more spacious, considered experience than previously. It still needs a few tweaks, particularly around service flow and bedding-in the new product, but what it offers is compelling: a calm, comfortable space to relax or catch up on work while travelling from A to B.

SAS is also consistently near the top of the airline punctuality rankings (according to Cirium data) – a noteworthy consideration where time is money.

For something a little more special than economy – without paying top-book prices – this strikes a sweet spot. SAS isn't pretending to be something it's not; the experience feels unmistakably Scandinavian in its design, service and simplicity. And while it may not yet rival the most refined offerings on the continent, if you're after tasty food, decent drinks and a premium experience that feels authentic rather than overdone, this is a very promising start. What business class passengers crave is consistency – and if SAS can deliver that, it might just have a winner. AN

▶ Generous leg room means there's space to store essentials in the seat-back pocket and still stretch out

HSBC
Scandinavian Airlines
SAS
Scandinavian
LN-RG

▼ SAS has rolled out its new short-haul business class on more than 80 routes across Scandinavia and Europe

THE ALMIGHTY DC-8

Providing disaster relief to millions around the world, humanitarian aid organisation Samaritan's Purse works around the clock with its trusty Douglas DC-8-72 Combi to reach people in need at any given time. **Chris Melaisi** speaks with its members to learn more about the charity and the DC-8 prior to its retirement

Founded in 1970, Samaritan's Purse is an evangelical Christian humanitarian aid organisation that provides worldwide support to those in times of need. The charity operates a varied fleet of rotary and fixed-wing aircraft from locations across the globe, including Turbo DC-3s, C-212 and one of the world's last flying Douglas DC-8s. The main aim of the organisation is to provide physical and spiritual aid no matter where it is required. In recent years, Samaritan's Purse personnel have travelled to all corners of the globe to provide this. From war-torn countries such as Ukraine, to conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, to natural disasters in South America and Asia, Samaritan's Purse goes where aid is needed most.

Greensboro airlift response

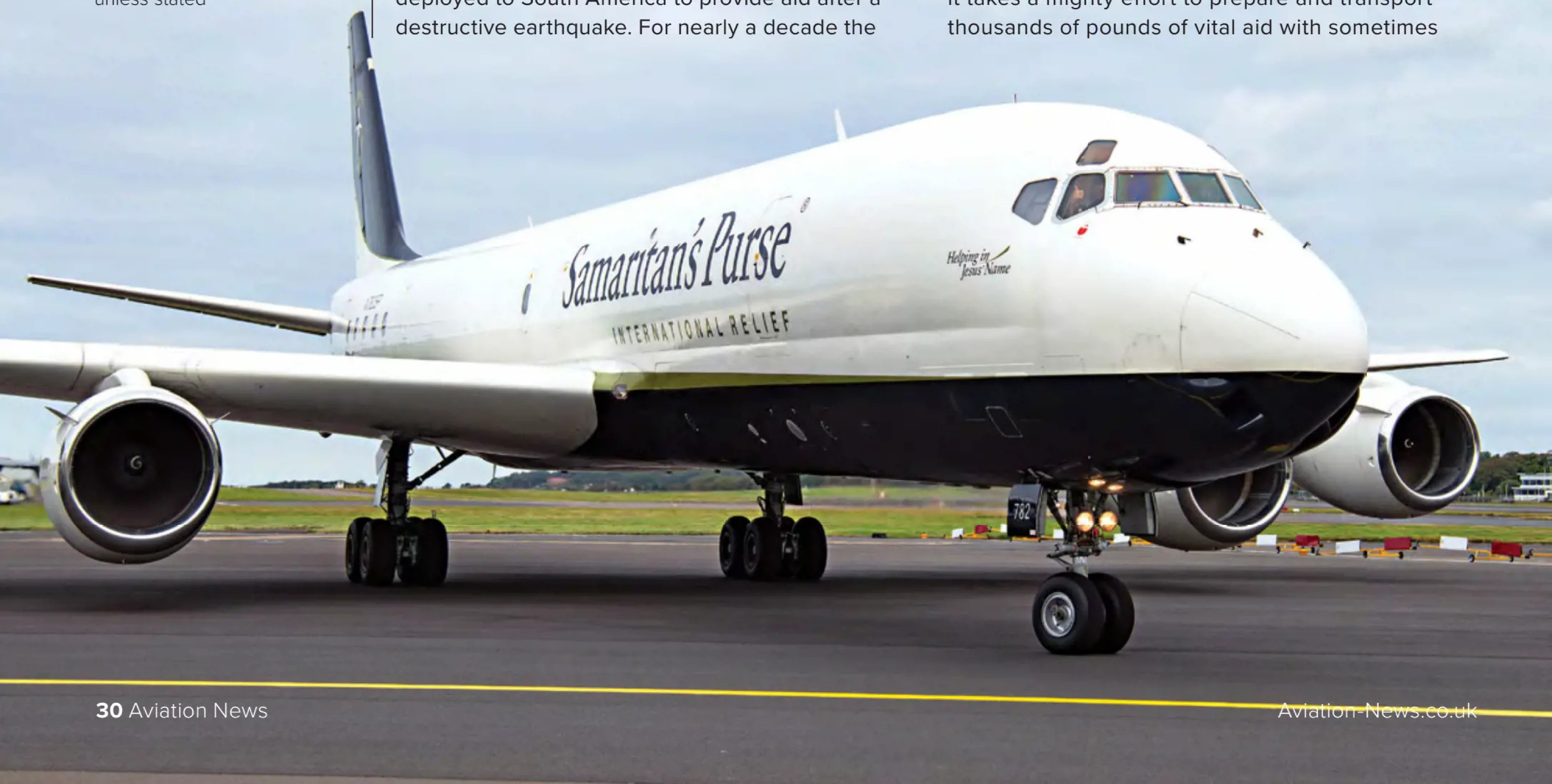
In 2015, Samaritan's Purse acquired a Douglas DC-8-72(CF), which created huge opportunity in being able to provide at short notice, global disaster response airlift missions. This was the ministry's first heavy aircraft, enabling a game-changing mission, providing direct access from their mission aviation services base in Greensboro, North Carolina, to the world. Bringing the aircraft back from a stint in the boneyard of Roswell, New Mexico, the FAA signed the aircraft as fit for service. Just 24 hours later, the mission aviation services team from Greensboro deployed to South America to provide aid after a destructive earthquake. For nearly a decade the DC-8 has been continually deployed around the world, mustering up 210 missions for Samaritan's Purse and providing critical help to millions.

Aviation News spoke with Jim Vechery, director of aviation at Samaritan's Purse, to learn more about mission preparation and the 'heavy' aircraft fleet based in North Carolina. Jim said: "The mission of Samaritan's Purse is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus, we do that by meeting people in their time of need, and when people are in need, speed matters. The aviation sector of Samaritan's Purse allows us to get to people in crisis areas quickly and bring vital relief supplies to aid the physical need people have, which we can then back up by aiding their spiritual need, which is the reason we exist.

"We currently have 28 aircraft in our inventory; I oversee the heavy airlift operation here in Greensboro where three aircraft are based. We have one Boeing 757-200F, one 767-300F, which is new to the fleet and will act as the DC-8 replacement, and of course, the mighty DC-8. Our mandate here is to be airborne 24 hours from the time we receive a call from headquarters, who will inform us which location requires immediate aid. Our aircraft and aircrew must always be trained and ready, so that we can respond to whatever the mission is, as quickly as possible."

Mission preparation

When operating into potentially dangerous areas, it takes a mighty effort to prepare and transport thousands of pounds of vital aid with sometimes



◢ **Thumbs up from pilot Andy Klischer as the crew taxi for departure. The DC-8 was returning home after an aid mission in the Middle East** All images Chris Melaisi, unless stated

Samaritan's Purse
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF

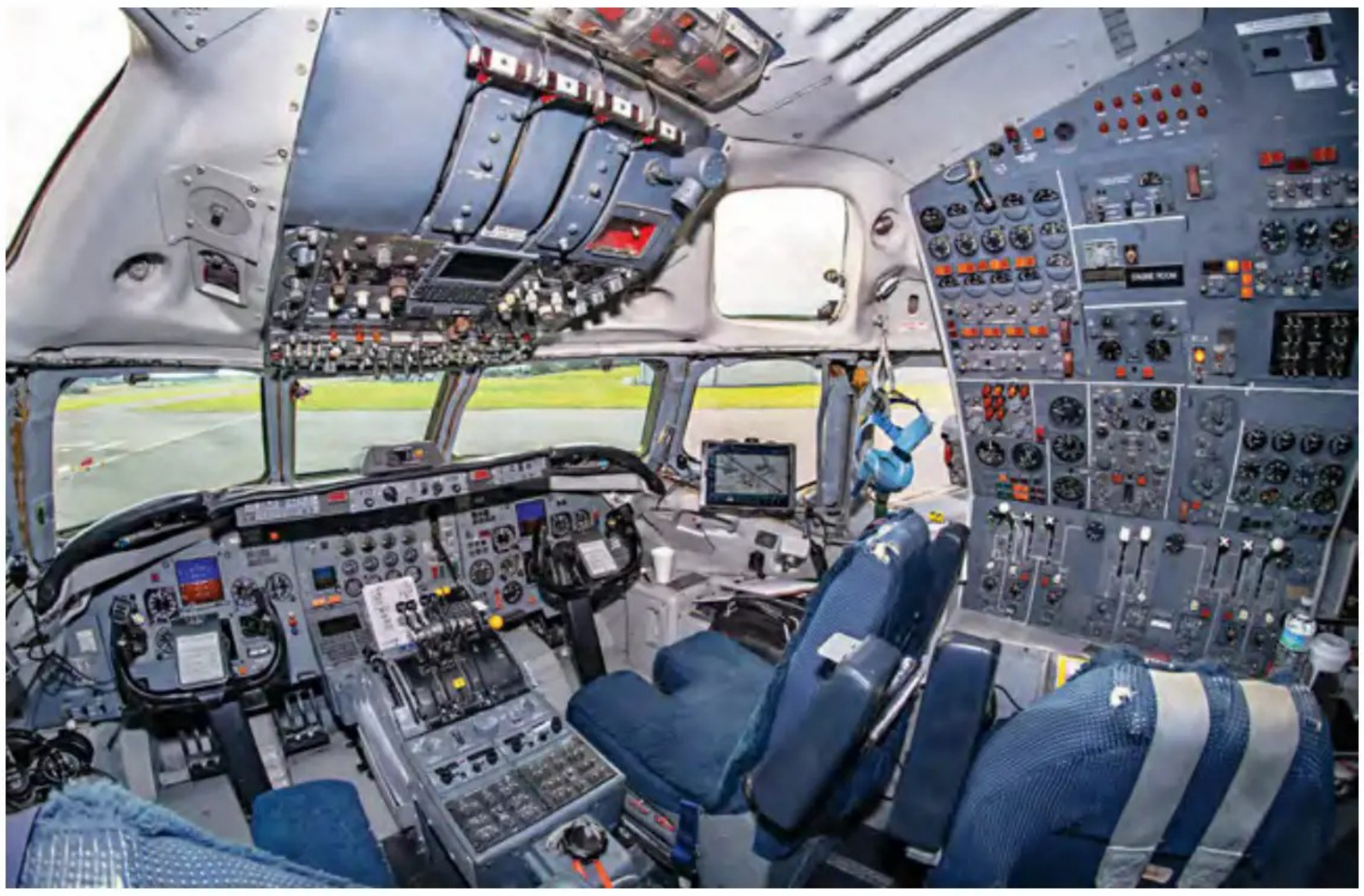
Flight mechanic Andy Farrell inspects the DC-8's CFM56-2C engine on a pre-flight walkaround. The aircraft received the upgraded engines in 1981 when serving under the French Air Force

just 24 hours' notice. Jim said: "Preparing for a mission in a short space of time is challenging but very doable with the right people, resources and planning. The first step to consider is the location we will be flying to, and which aircraft is the most suitable for the mission. The biggest limiting factor is usually the country we are planning to visit. Gaining clearance to fly into and operate in that country's airspace can be difficult, especially in times of conflict and getting all the necessary supplies to that country is another challenge.

"Thankfully, we plan for this and have a large warehouse where supplies are managed and can be loaded on to aircraft cargo pallets, ready to be transported by road to Greensboro at short notice. Each of our 18-wheeler trucks can hold five aircraft pallets, our DC-8 holds ten of these, meaning with just two trucks we can transport a full cargo load, which can be loaded straight on to the aircraft on arrival at Greensboro. This saves vast amounts of time on the ramp. Once we have an approved flight plan, fuel and our cargo, the mission is relatively simple and that comes down to our seasoned and very experienced crews. They take the aircraft and fly it anywhere in the world where it's required. For example, over the past year, we operated two flights into Vietnam, we provided hurricane relief in the Caribbean and aid for an earthquake in Myanmar.

"The cargo we carry to aid people in need ranges from medical supplies, shelters, ready-to-use supplementary food packets (RUSF), people and medical staff, sanitation kits and emergency field hospitals, of which we have three different tiers, with tier three being the largest and most capable. To transport a tier three field hospital, it takes our aircraft two to three journeys due to its sheer size and complexity, but with our new Boeing 767F, we will be able to transport it in one go, saving huge amounts of time. This is vital when disaster and devastation have occurred in the area we're visiting. As a combi-aircraft, the DC-8 can transport up to 32 passengers as well as its cargo load; this comes in handy when transporting, for example, a tier one field hospital, where doctors, nurses and the assembly team can travel with the cargo in one go. As much as this is advantageous on our missions, typically we require more people to travel via commercial aircraft to support the operation, so once the DC-8 retires, all supporting members will travel using commercial assets, which won't impact our response."

▲ A unique view into N782SP's main landing gear bay, as an inspection is carried out by the flight mechanic ahead of departure to North Carolina



▼ The DC-8's impressive three-man-operated cockpit, with space for two pilots and the flight engineer. There is also a jump seat, which is used as required

N782SP

DC-8-72(CF) (c/n: 46013/427) N782SP originally rolled off the Douglas final assembly line on December 24, 1968, as a DC-8-62CF (convertible freighter) and was delivered to Finnair in 1969. After several years, the aircraft was bought by the French Air Force in 1981 and converted to a DC-8-72(CF), when its Pratt & Whitney JT3D-3B engines were replaced with more powerful and fuel-efficient CFM International CFM56-2C. Air Transport International then purchased the aircraft in 2005; its large main-deck cargo door suited its operation. ATI further advanced the aircraft by converting it to a combi, allowing space for up to ten freight pallets and 32 seated passengers in a 3-3 configuration at the rear of the aircraft. It saw another stint of successful flying from Ohio, USA, before retirement in 2013. Samaritan's Purse saved the aircraft from an uncertain future and purchased the DC-8 in 2015. After considerable financial and technical investment to comply with FAA and international regulations, the aircraft was re-registered N782SP and returned to the air. This marked the beginning of heavy-

▲ Seasoned, DC-8 veterans Ken Munn (left) and Andy Klischer (right) are seen at the controls, ready for another flight across the Atlantic to Greensboro

lift global disaster response operations out of the charity's Greensboro aviation base at the Piedmont Triad International Airport (KGSO/GSO).

A well-seasoned crew

The organisation's pilot and director of operations Andy Klischer discussed flying the DC-8 and, together with engineer Joe Proffitt, spoke about some memorable missions.

During his career, Andy has totalled more than 20,000 flying hours, flying an array of different aircraft including L1011s and 747s, although the first jet he flew was a DC-8. Andy was a flight engineer, a first officer and captain on the type, and also a mechanic. His first aviation job overseas was as a DC-8 line mechanic, followed by a DC-8 jet engine specialist before moving onto roles in the cockpit. He said: "I spent my career flying various types and by chance stumbled across the tail of N782SP sticking out of the hangar at Greensboro. Being such a unique and special aircraft to me, I had to go for a look and that's when I was introduced to Samaritan's Purse and their operation. Before long I was a captain here, back flying the mighty DC-8 and then I quickly became the director of operations and have been part of the operation for over five years."

Joe was in the air force for 26 years, during which time he was a flight engineer. He was then hired by Airborne Express, which at that time had 36 DC-8s. Joe flew the DC-8 as an engineer and later trained flight engineers on the panel in the simulator in Wilmington, Ohio. This DC-8 simulator is now the last in the world. The world's current and last DC-8 operators from South America and Africa still bring their crews here for training. The DC-8 was eventually phased out, and Joe became a 757/767 ground school instructor. He said: "During that time I was still able to work in the DC-8 simulator, training crews from other companies." He then did some work for NASA: "I became a contract flight engineer for seven years, flying on their DC-8 research aircraft on several missions. I continued my simulator work and eventually crossed paths with Samaritan's Purse." Joe was delighted to have the opportunity to fly the organisation's DC-8, adding: "This is where I will end my flying career."

Andy continued: 'It's a humbling aeroplane – I've flown lots of different aircraft over my career and not many bring you back down to earth like this one. It's a serious aircraft to fly but that's part of the reason I like it.

"The DC-8 is the backbone of Samaritan's Purse, it is very near and dear to my heart and I've spent a lot of my career with them. Being able to fly in a three-man cockpit in 2025, alongside such professionals and DC-8 experts like Joe, is great. I can ask any questions and have no worries. It's

◀ The Samaritan's Purse DC-8-72(CF) is a combi freighter, allowing room for 32 seats at the rear of the aircraft. The main cargo bay is located through the small entrance on the left side

◀ In the wake of Cyclone Idai in 2019, Samaritan's Purse airlifted more than 70 tons of critical relief supplies to Beira, Mozambique, on the DC-8, including an emergency field hospital, to aid impacted families Samaritan's Purse

been a blessing to fly alongside some of the most seasoned professionals out there; with over 120 years of experience between us in the cockpit, we are well adapted and positioned for any mission." Known within the ministry as the 'mighty' DC-8, Andy continues; We feel God has led us here to follow this path, flying the mighty DC-8 to provide help and support to millions around the world. I mean it when I say it's the 'mighty' DC-8. Never did I imagine flying halfway around the world to perform what are sometimes near impossible missions, arriving into natural disaster or war-torn areas. People would never, in their lives plan to go to the places we have taken 'The Eight' but we're there, getting the job done in Jesus' Name and with a platform which has been exceptional. It will be a sad day when the aircraft retires but I've enjoyed every moment.'

The Samaritan's Purse DC-8 has been involved in many memorable missions over the past decade, and Joe described aid missions to Ukraine between 2022-2023. Samaritan's Purse transported emergency field hospitals, medical and other disaster relief specialists; it cared for more than 21,000 patients and provided more than 245m pounds of food and water. Joe said: "We performed 42 airlift missions to war-torn Ukraine. On ten of those missions, we brought refugees back on the DC-8 to Canada, women and children who may not see their husbands and fathers again. Missions like this really put into perspective about why we're helping and doing what we do."

Two more notable missions out of hundreds of equally important airlifts include a deployment to Ethiopia in 2021. Samaritan's Purse airlifted more than 120 tons of critical relief supplies on four DC-8 flights to northern Ethiopia after months of internal conflict left millions of families without access to necessities. In 2023, Samaritan's Purse delivered more than 53 tons of critical aid aboard the DC-8 to support around 100,000 ethnic Armenians who

> **"We performed 42 airlift missions to war-torn Ukraine. On ten of those missions, we brought refugees back on the DC-8 to Canada – women and children who may not see their husbands and fathers again"**

▼ Seen departing at 1am, local time, 'NSP8' performed a quick turnaround in Scotland in August 2020. The crew was urgently responding to a crisis in Beirut, Lebanon, where a major explosion occurred, effecting thousands

RYANAIR
Samaritan's Purse
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF
N782SP

fled their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh. Samaritan's Purse doctors, nurse, and physiotherapists also treated burn victims with severe injuries from a gas explosion.

On-going response

Recently, the DC-8 has flown as part of the Samaritan's Purse response to the conflict in Gaza. Food and aid have been provided to the people of Gaza and, as of October 2, 2025, the organisation had distributed one million RUSF packets. A dozen relief flights enabled Samaritan's Purse to carry more than 202 tonnes of these life-saving rations to the region. Alongside food distribution, Samaritan's Purse medical teams have also been providing urgent first aid to those arriving on site in need, treating more than 1,400 patients (including recurring patients) to date. The organisation's response has been to civilians on both sides of the conflict in Israel and Gaza since October 7, 2023, and they anticipate being able to do more for these people in the future.

N782SP is being retired at the end of December 2025, marking the end of American-registered DC-8s and the world's last 72 series model. When asked about the type's retirement, Jim replied: "The first mission with our DC-8 was April 20, 2016, which involved a response to Ecuador where our people transported an emergency field hospital after a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Purchasing the DC-8 was a game-changer for the ministry, enabling us to provide relief supplies on a large-scale capacity at short notice, anywhere in the world. In the almost ten years of operating the aircraft, it's flown 210 missions and delivered over 9.5m pounds of cargo to various worldwide locations.

"It has performed incredibly and has been very reliable despite its age. For example, last year we performed four missions in seven days to the Caribbean and after each mission there was rarely one fault or issue noted. The more the DC-8 flies, the better it gets! But unfortunately, due to a lack of spares being available and the vulnerability of the aircraft, it's time to modernise the fleet. Our heavy-lift aircraft sport the title 'Helping in Jesus' Name' on the outside, beside the cockpit. No matter where we show up, people know who we are representing and what our job is, and we are very proud of that. Our DC-8 has performed amazingly, and we will continue to enjoy it in the final months of flying and providing aid to those who need it most."

Samaritan's Purse' Boeing 767-300F N367SP will take over as the lead heavy-lift international crisis response aircraft from 2026 and will continue to help millions of people around the world. There are no current plans for the DC-8 afterwards, but it is hoped it will end up in a museum in the USA.

Samaritan's Purse
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF

▲ DC-8-72(CF) N782SP returning after completing another aid flight to Ukraine in March 2022. The aircraft completed 42 airlifts during this campaign

◀ The mighty DC-8 is seen on start-up at Prestwick International Airport in August 2025. The aircraft was returning to the USA after an aid flight to the Middle East. Note the Air Start Unit connected to the DC-8's unique nose, which features intakes

Samaritan's Purse
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF
N782SP

▼ A DC-8 departing the UK, for what will likely be the very last time. Here, the Samaritan's Purse DC-8-72(CF) lifts from Prestwick's runway 12 as 'NSP8' during August 2025

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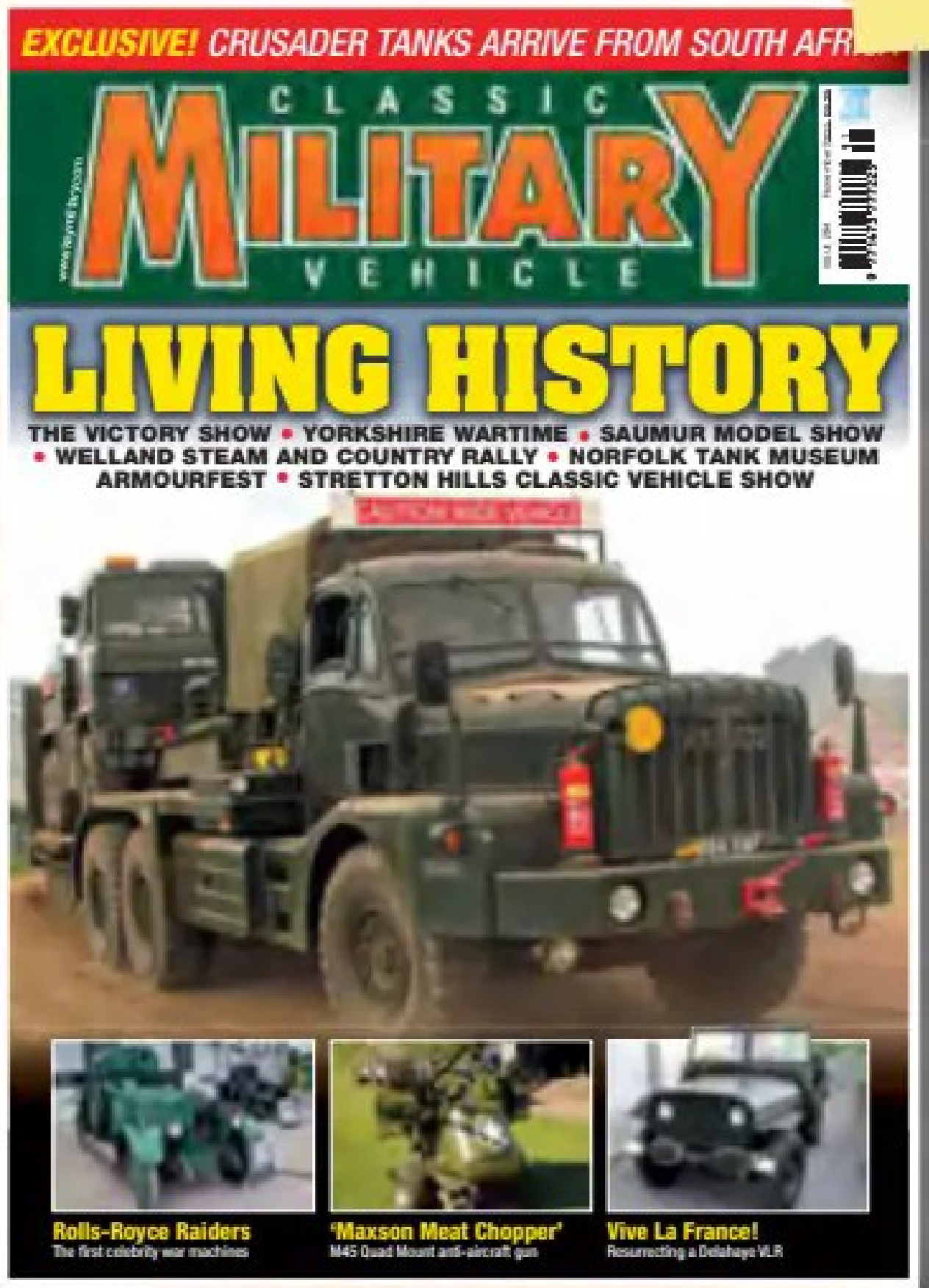

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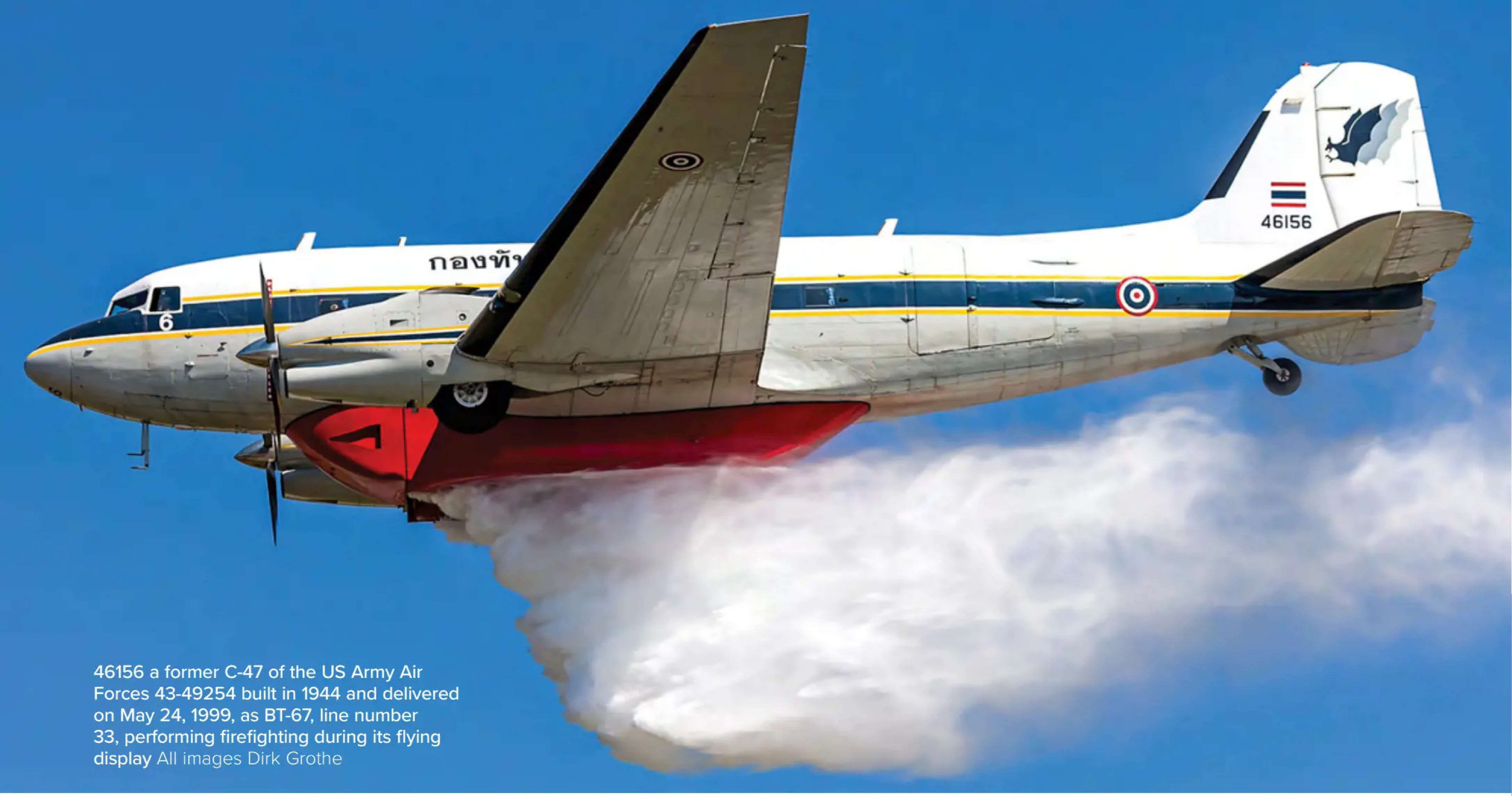
Basler BT-67 flies at Children's Day 2025

Dirk Grothe visited Wing 46 airbase Phitsanulok in Thailand to watch the Royal Thai Air Force Basler BT-67's flying display on the country's national Children's Day 2025



46156 a former C-47 of the US Army Air Forces 43-49254 built in 1944 and delivered on May 24, 1999, as BT-67, line number 33, performing firefighting during its flying display All images Dirk Grothe

On the second Saturday in January, Thailand celebrates the national Children's Day and opens air force bases across the country to the public. Families flock to the aprons of the air force bases to enjoy a varied programme of entertainment. In addition to live music, competitions and street food stands as far as the eye can see, the air force's aircraft are presented, providing a unique opportunity to take a closer look at otherwise rarely seen aircraft. Spotters, who are at least as excited as the children, flock to the air force bases on this day.

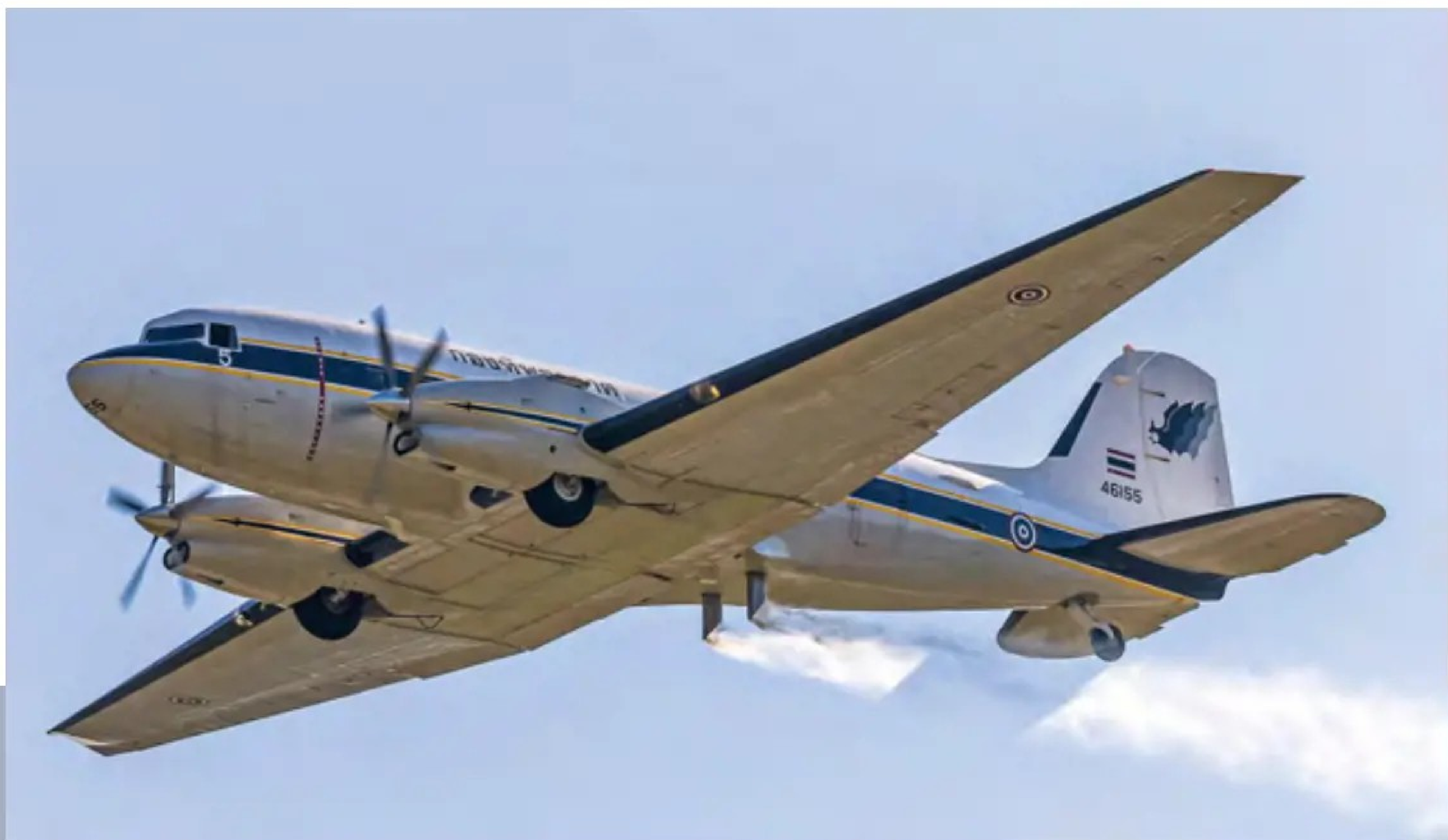
In addition to the static display, there's a supporting programme with flight demonstrations of the various Royal Thai Air Force aircraft, including the Pilatus Porter, F-5, Saab Gripen and F-16. While the airbase at Bangkok Don Mueang Airport offers the largest selection of static and flying displays, there is a special highlight to be seen an hour's flight north of Bangkok. The Basler BT-67s are based at 461 Squadron 'Vampire' in Phitsanulok and in addition to the static display, they can also be seen in flight. Two Basler BT-67s took off twice, at 0930hrs and 1300hrs, to demonstrate their capabilities with two flybys each.

▼ 46156 taxiing for take-off in front of the spectators

ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE
6
156

5
DANGER PRO
EMERGENCY EXIT

▲ Aircrew waving to the visitors after the flying display



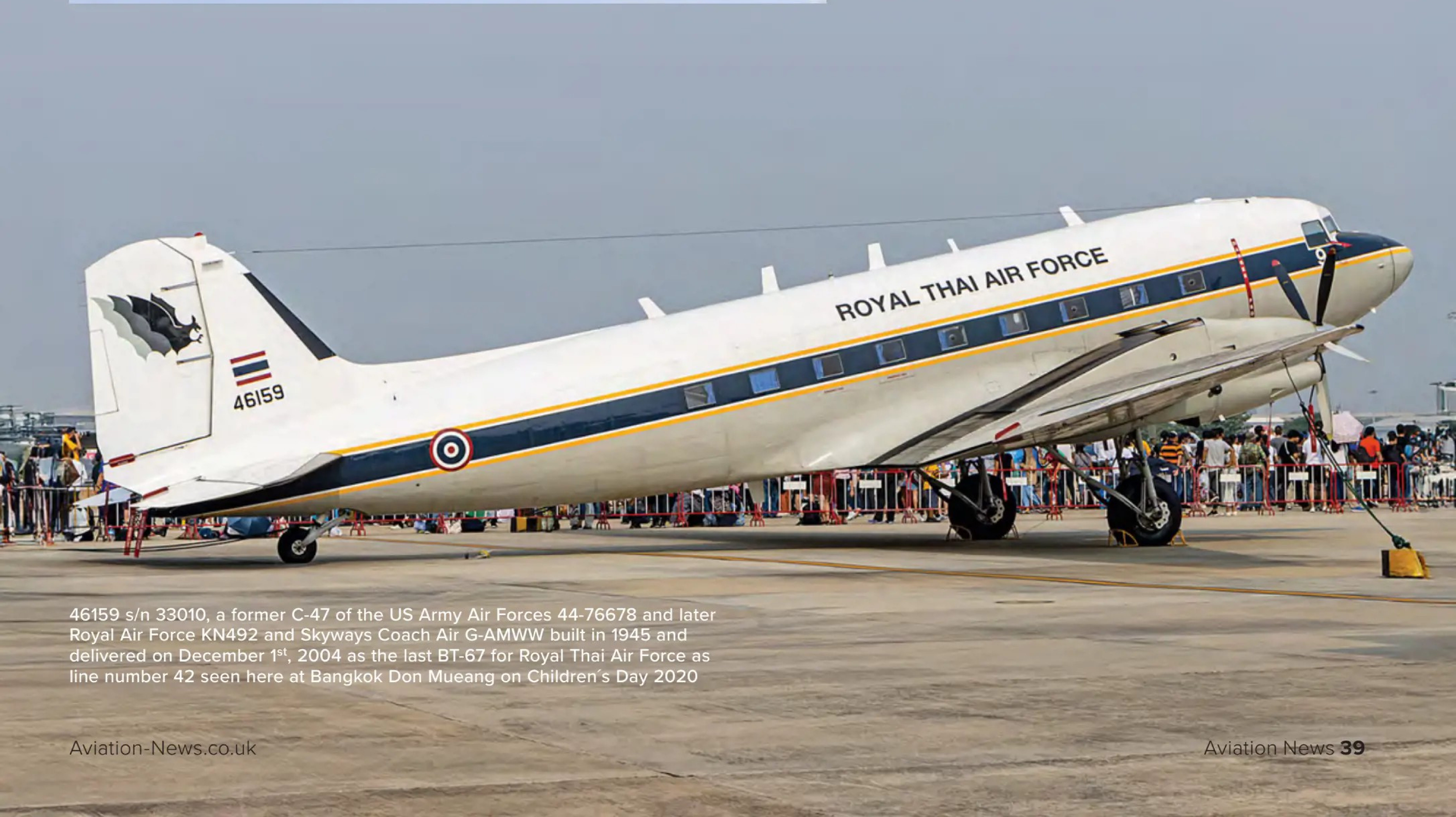
▼ Seconds away from dropping water from its tank, 46155 approaches the centre of the crowd

Between 1998 and 2004, the Royal Thai Air Force received a total of nine Basler BT-67s (46151 to 46159), all of which were former US Army Air Forces C-47s built between 1943 and 1945, and converted to BT-67s by Basler Turbo Conversions at Oshkosh Airport in Wisconsin, USA. Such a conversion takes around 50,000 hours of work over six months and costs upwards of $12m, depending on the equipment. The front section of the fuselage is extended by around 1m and the profile of the wing tips is changed. The biggest alteration is the switch from the original radial engines to Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A turboprop engines with five-blade Hartzell propellers, and the installation of a modern glass cockpit.

The F-16, which visited the various air force bases, one after the other, for a short flight programme that day, had just thundered away over the horizon when the two Basler BT-67s with the registration 46155 (L2K-05/42) and 46156 (L2K-06/42) started their engines and rolled past the onlookers to take off, the crew waving from the cockpit. The 46155 is a so-called rainmaker for cloud seeding to produce rain. This is intended to combat the drought in large parts of the country. 46156 is a firefighter and can drop water from its 3,000-litre tank. With a clear blue sky, you can watch a total of six BT-67 passes, including the take-off, with both BT-67s demonstrating their capabilities. After landing, both BT-67s roll past the audience again, stop briefly alongside the crowd to wave goodbye.

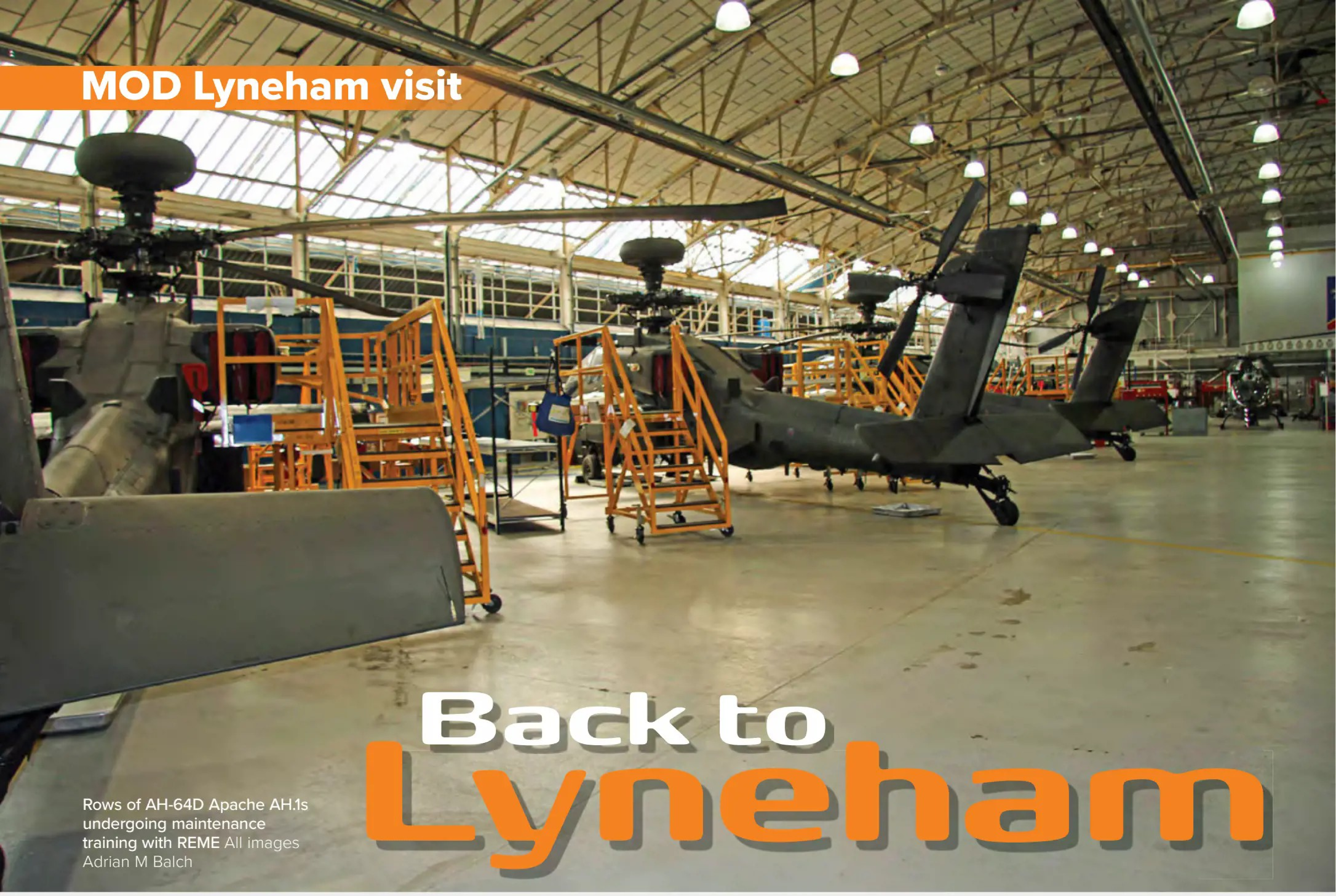
In addition to the two flying BT-67s, the 46154 (L2K-04/41) was in the static display and the 46152 (L2K-02/41) is on display - together with various GAF Nomads - at the B46 Restaurant between Phitsanulok Airport and the airbase. This was withdrawn from use following an accident in Korat in 2006. In the grounds of Wing 46 there is also a former Royal Thai Air Force AC-47D Spooky (44-77152 s/n 33484 built in 1945) in camouflage paint, which was taken out of service in 1984.

So why not put Thailand on your bucket list? Children's Day 2026 will take place on Saturday January 10, 2026.



46159 s/n 33010, a former C-47 of the US Army Air Forces 44-76678 and later Royal Air Force KN492 and Skyways Coach Air G-AMWW built in 1945 and delivered on December 1st, 2004 as the last BT-67 for Royal Thai Air Force as line number 42 seen here at Bangkok Don Mueang on Children's Day 2020

Back to Lyneham



Rows of AH-64D Apache AH.1s undergoing maintenance training with REME All images Adrian M Balch

Returning 32 years after he served at the Wiltshire station, **Adrian M Balch** makes a visit to see what changes have been made since RAF Lyneham became 'MoD Lyneham

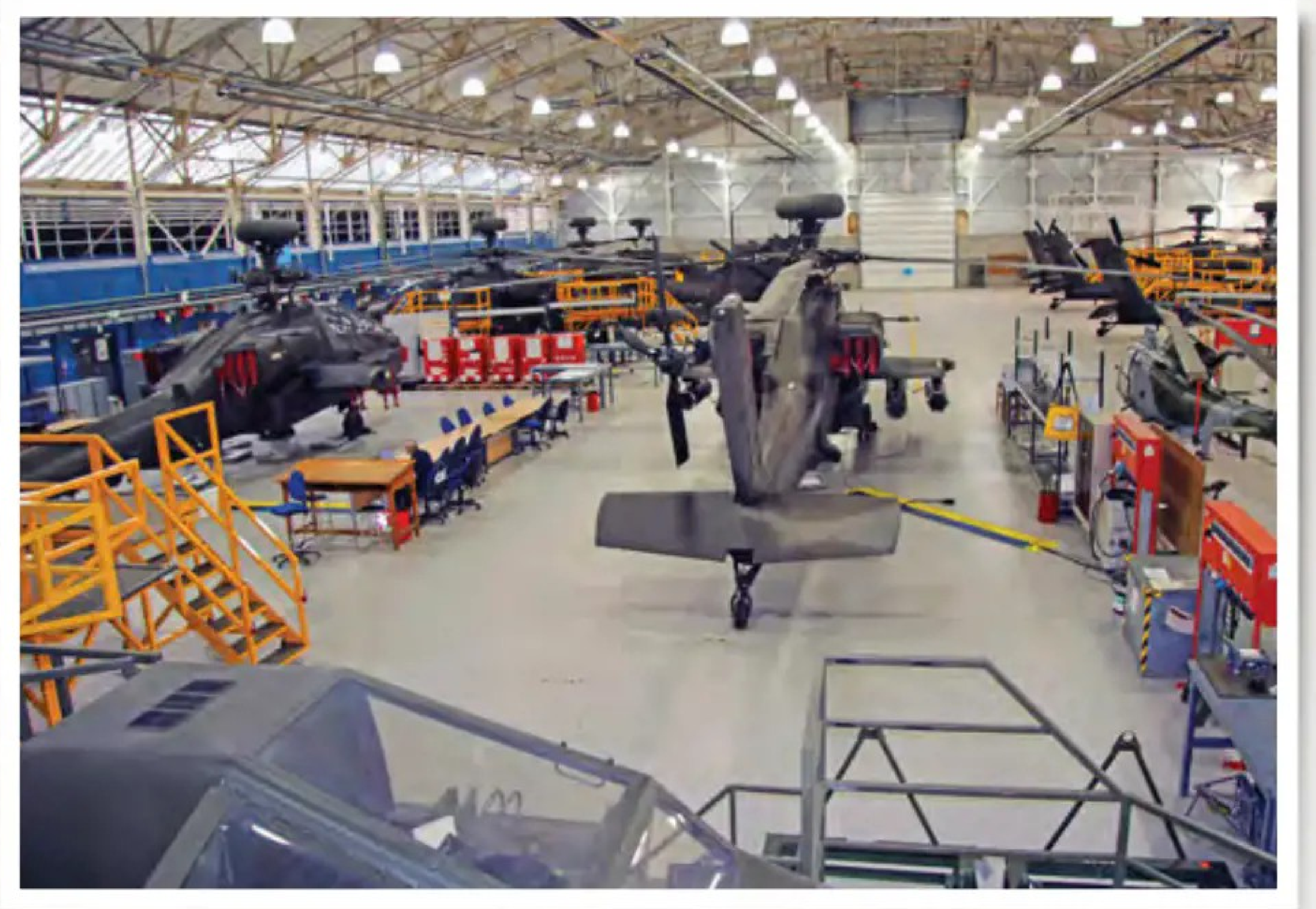
The Royal Air Force closed RAF Lyneham on December 31, 2012, although the final Hercules departed and flying operations ceased in 2011 as part of the gradual handover process to RAF Brize Norton. The decision to close the station was made in 2002 as part of a strategic review of military bases, and the final flag-lowering ceremony was held in December 2012.

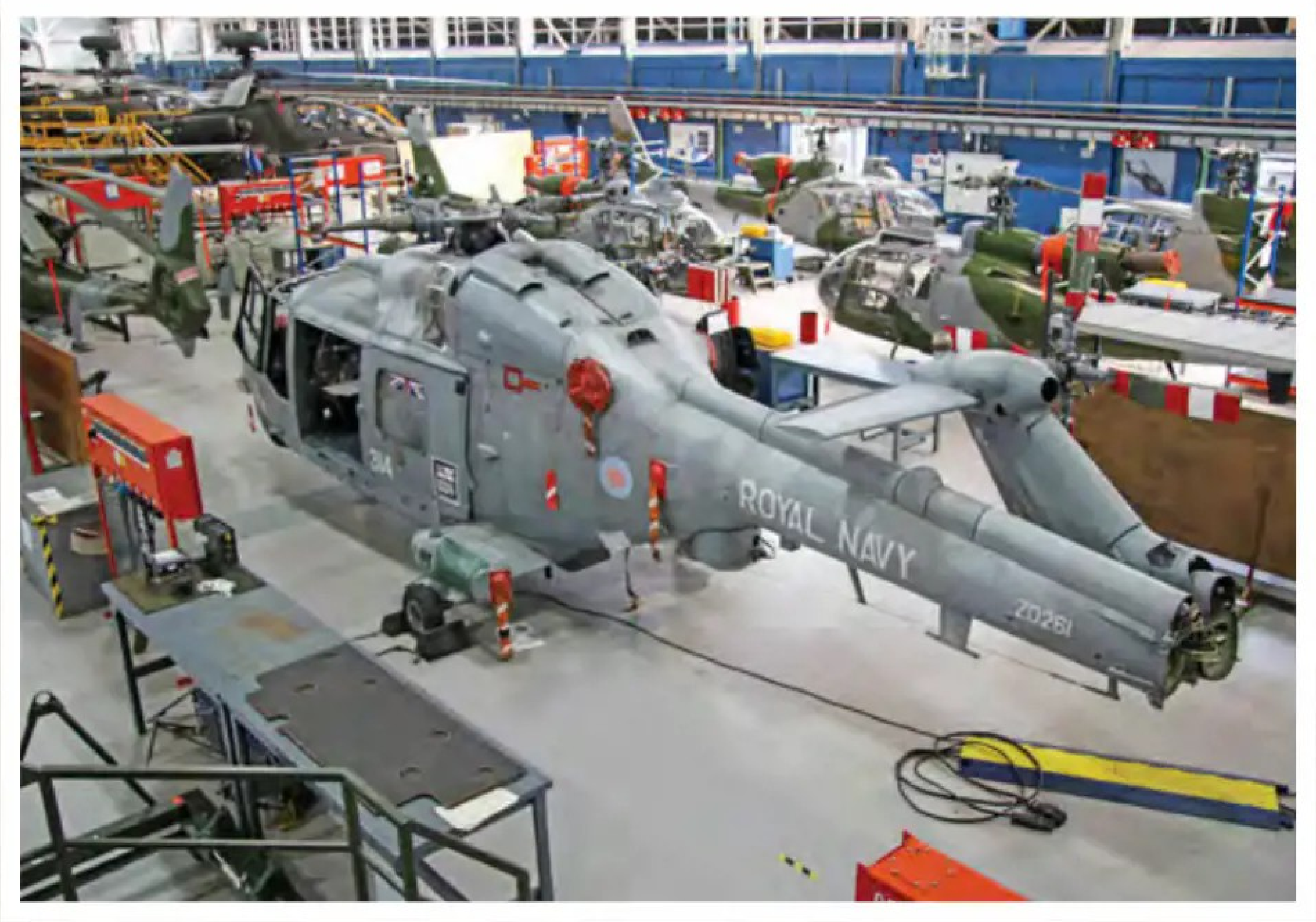
The School of Army Aeronautical Engineering (SAAE), part of the wider Defence School of Aeronautical Engineering (DSAE), delivers aircraft maintenance and training to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) on site. The Defence School of Electronic and Mechanical Engineering (DSEME), co-located at MOD Lyneham, delivers non-aircraft technical training to military personnel from the Royal Marines, Army and RAF.

Previously, SAAE was at Arborfield and Bordon, but moved to Lyneham in September 2015 as part of the Defence Technical Training Change Programme, with the REME Museum relocating there around the same time.

◢ The last remaining former Royal Navy Lynx HMA.8, ZD261 '314/VL' being used by REME for ground instruction, alongside the Army Gazelles

◣ A view of the training hangar with rows of AH-64D Apache AH.1s





On entering the training hangar, which was previously known as 'J1' and that had once housed the RAF Comets of 216 Squadron between 1956-1984, visitors see orderly rows of helicopters used for ground instruction training.

The REME initially had 17 Lynx, eight Royal Navy Mk 8 and nine Army Mk7s at Aborfield, Berkshire, for instructional use, and took the following with them to Lyneham:

TAD 07 – built as a GTA
TAD 09 – one of the four original flight test aircraft, painted grey
TAD 11 – Mk1
TAD 12 – cancelled Qatar Police contract – Mk28
TAD 13 – cancelled Qatar Police Contract – Mk28
TAD 16 – ex-Qatar Police MK.28 – for REME Museum
XZ 170 – wheeled conversion of Mk 7

Plus: Mk.7s XZ 172, XZ 187, XZ188, XZ207, XZ617, XZ653, XZ666, XZ679, XZ188, XZ207 (Cabin only. Transportation joint cracked – unable to hold a tail), XZ617, XZ653, XZ666, XZ679 and ZE381.

The 17 Lynx helicopters used for training personnel have gradually been replaced by eight AH-64D Apache AH.1s, alongside six Gazelle AH.1s. The Mk8 Lynx were transferred to HMS Sultan, which is home to another school within DSAE, the Royal Naval Air Engineering and Survival Equipment School (RNAESS), for use as ground training aids, with just one remaining at Lyneham in the form of former Royal Navy HMA.8SRU, ZD261 '315/VL' which last flew with 815 Squadron in 2015.

There are only two other helicopters on site, a former Qatar Police Westland Lynx Mk.28, QP-32, outside the REME Museum painted in REME colours, and Westland Scout XV141 inside the museum.

The new CAA Aligned helicopter maintenance training course lasts 35 weeks. It offers classroom instruction and exams to practical hands-on training, culminating with experience work on the Apaches. The latter are of the AH-64D AHMk1 variant that have now been withdrawn from use and replaced in Army Air Corps service by the AH-64E version. Consequently, the earlier variants have now been released for ground instructional training with REME.

The operational AH-64E Apache is a significantly upgraded version of the AH-64D, featuring more powerful engines, new composite main rotor blades for improved performance, and enhanced digital connectivity. Key differences include the ability to control unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), superior Integrated Helmet and Display Sighting System (IHADSS) integration with the newer Arrowhead system for better target acquisition, and improved integration into modern networked battlefields using Link 16. The AH-64E also offers greater speed, lift capability and operational range than the AH-64D.

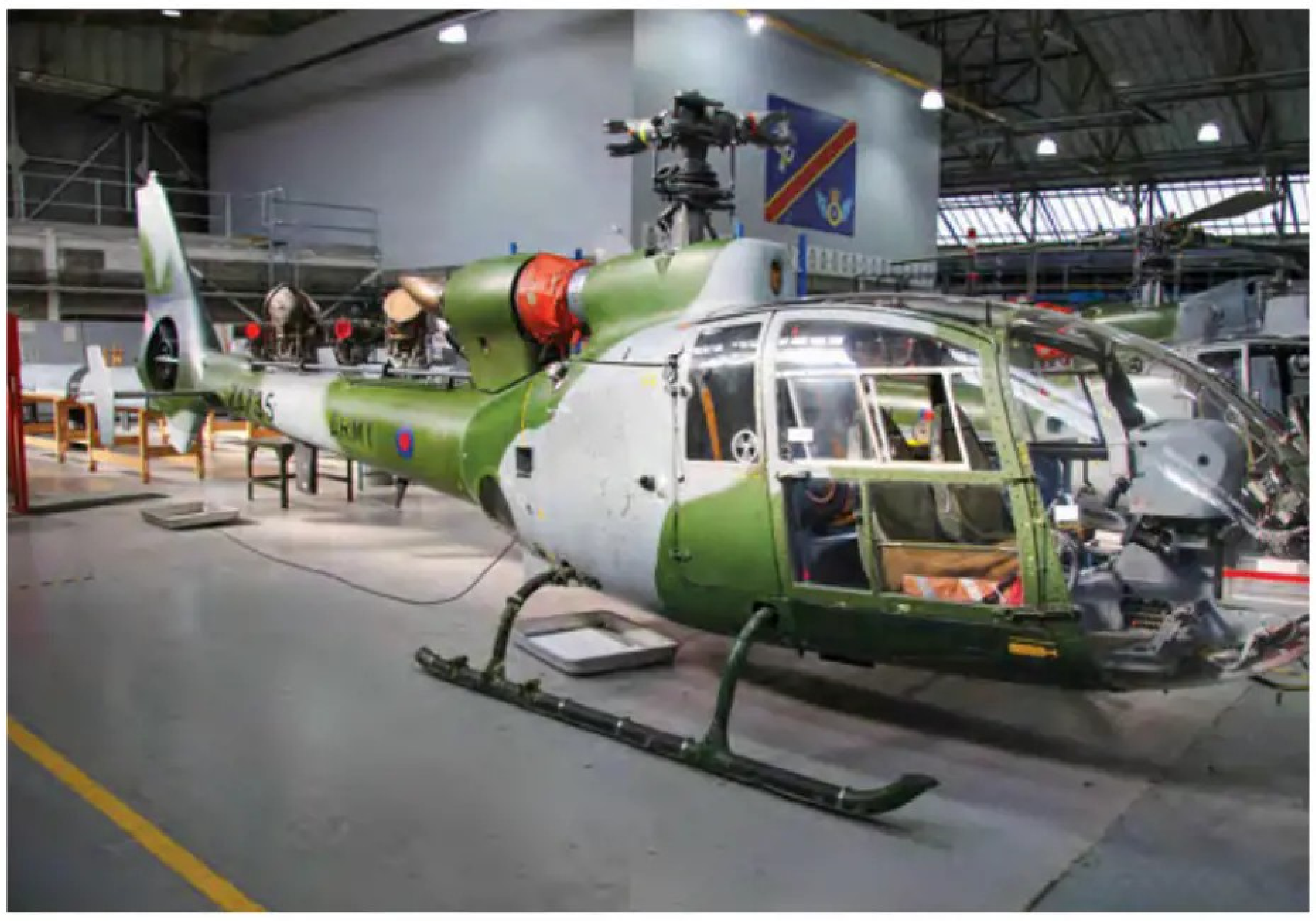
SAAE run courses that range from Initial Trade Training (ITT) through to subsequent trade training (STT) and onto Artificer and Aircraft Engineering officer training. This means that they train students from Craftsman (Private) all the way through their career and up to Captain. All of the ITT training is now aligned with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), with the first CAA aligned STT courses starting this month (November). This means that once they have completed training, gained some experience and, providing certain conditions are met, REME Tradespeople can apply for a CAA maintenance licence if they wish. This has been a massive step forward and aligns the SAAE training with the CAA in terms of qualifications and provides a tempting package to new joiners.

Not only are the Army at Lyneham, but the RAF have returned in the form of Number 4 School of Technical Training (No 4 SoTT). They provide RAF Trade Group 5 Initial Trade Training and subsequent professional trade training across its ground engineering disciplines. AN

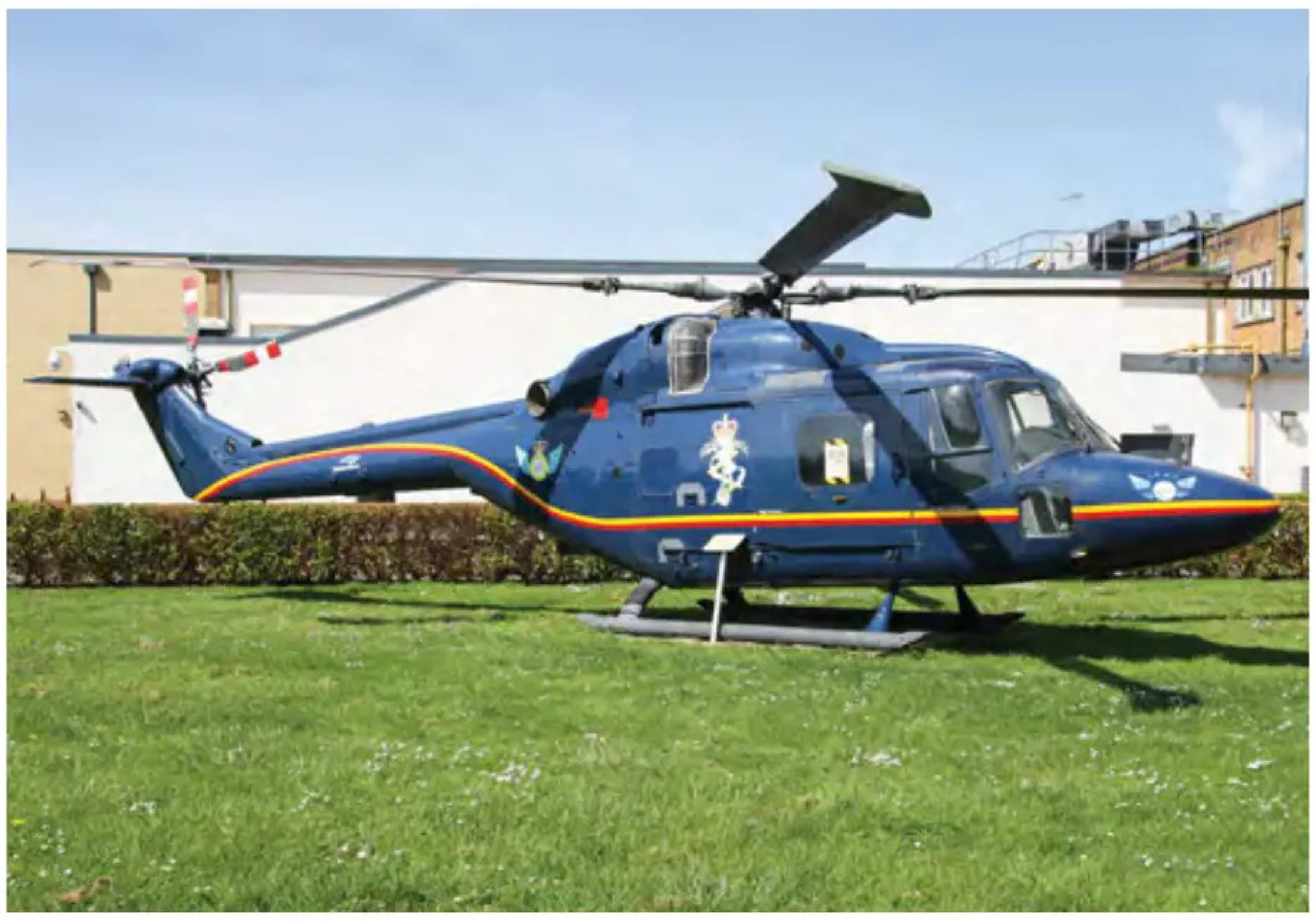
The author wishes to thank REME and especially the SAAE ASM for the visit facilities.

MOD
Lyneham

▲ Lyneham's main gate now changed from RAF Lyneham to MOD Lyneham



◢ ZA735, one of six Gazelle AH.1s now used for training by REME



◣ Westland Lynx Mk.28, 'TAD016', formerly 'QP-32' of the Qatar Police, on display outside Lyneham's REME Museum repainted in REME's colours

N7025N

A US Navy schemed Grumman HU-16C Albatross, N7025N graces the water at the 2025 Pacific Airshow Mark Lynham

ATR 600
PROPELLING TH

TURBOPROPS: BACK TO THE

Turboprops are an essential asset for regional air connectivity. Essentially, only ATR is offering them nowadays. Does the turboprop have a future? **Richard Schuurman** investigates

ATR 72-600
ATR

The ATR-72 has been a reliable asset to many airlines around the world since the late 80s. ATR sticks to the view that nothing beats a turboprop when it comes to economics and efficiency ATR

FUTURE

▲ The cockpit of the Deutsche Aircraft D328eco test aircraft Richard Schuurman

Operating to a remote airport or airstrip somewhere in Africa or commuting between islands in the Pacific is where a turboprop stands out. Only small regional jets could potentially go there, but this part of the aircraft market is turboprop territory. "These routes are the DNA of ATR, these aircraft are the lifeline of our customers," said ATR CEO Nathalie Tarnaud Laude.

But elsewhere in regions like North America and Europe, the trend continues with a shift from turboprops to small regional jets. US carriers even replace these with narrowbodies as they 'upgauge' their networks. With ATR currently the only Western manufacturer of new turboprops after De Havilland Canada suspended production of the Dash 8, you would think that turboprops have passed their sell-by date. Not so, if you take a closer look.

Market forecast

At the Paris Airshow in June, Avions de Transport Régional shared its latest market forecast. It foresees demand for 2,100 new turboprops in the next 20 years, of which 1,690 are in the 70-seat category and 410 are in the 50-seat class. The world's fleet will grow from 1,650 to 2,530 aircraft, considering that 550 newer turboprops will still be active in 2044.

These numbers look healthy, but when you compare them to previous forecasts, there is a significant change. In 2018, ATR forecasted demand for 3.020 aircraft by 2037. The 2022 version – the last one before this year – reduced this to 2,450. In the 2025 version, demand is at 2,100 with a shift from the replacement market (1,100 now, 1,500 in 2022) to growth (880 versus 710). ATR's Senior Vice President of marketing, Alexis Vidal, attributes the lower demand to "our competitor no longer producing new planes" in reference to De Havilland Canada.

Tarnaud Laude stresses that turboprops will remain essential. "They will be needed where regional connectivity by road or rail is behind or impossible, like between islands or in mountainous areas. But we also like to accelerate point-to-point routes. A large part of the 120 new routes that were opened last year are point-to-point. They don't compete with other modes of transportation; turboprops are mostly complementary."

▼ An artist's rendering of Embraer's TP, once predicted to enter service in 2027 and then moved to 2030. This won't happen because Embraer pulled the plug on the TP in 2022 Embraer

Regional demand

By region, the biggest turboprop market in the next 20 years will be Asia-Pacific, with demand for 835 aircraft. In this year's forecast, ATR includes China in this region, whereas it was excluded in the 2022 version. Vice versa, India is now listed separately with 210 aircraft. It was part of the Asia-Pacific region in the previous outlook that included 975 aircraft for Asia-Pacific.

Europe and the former CIS republics see demand for 360 turboprops, down from 400 three years ago. Despite the shift towards regional jets, ATR sees marginal growth in the North American market to 255 aircraft from 240. That's ahead of the 240 forecasted for Africa and the Middle East. South America is the only market with a significant downward trend in demand to 200 aircraft from 325 in the previous outlook. The Airbus A320neo family and Boeing MAX are clear favourites for establishing new routes.

ATR sticks to the view that nothing beats a turboprop when it comes to economics and efficiency. "Over the same leg, a turboprop uses 45% less fuel than a small jet," said Vidal. "That's 45% less CO2 emissions. Over a ten-year period, operating a single ATR aircraft is $25m cheaper than a jet. We open routes in regions where there is no air connectivity, like in India, but even still in the United States."

Embraer

Not so long ago, the North American market was also big in the outlook of Embraer. The Brazilians started working on their turboprop (TP) in 2016, unveiling details of a 70 and 90-seater in 2021. Embraer really believed that a clean sheet turboprop with state-of-the-art hybrid/electric propulsion technology would not only replace older-generation regional jets, but even show the way forward for regional aviation.

But entry into service, once believed would happen in 2027 and then moved to 2030, won't happen because Embraer pulled the plug on the TP in 2022. It has been unable to find an engine that adequately satisfies its requirements and business case. While

▲ The French/Italian airframer has been working on the EVO model for over two years now ATR

turboprops still feature in Embraer's own market outlook, demand has been lowered to 1,780 in the latest forecast issued at the Paris Airshow. That's down 500 aircraft on the 2022 outlook.

Asked how Embraer perceives the turboprop market, Arjan Meijer, CEO of Commercial Aircraft, said: "The market depends on the products that are available out there. When we tried to launch the TP, we were absolutely convinced that there would be a market. But we were forced to ditch the project. What we see now is a market with aircraft types that are outdated. Customers prefer jets over turboprops, and this is evident in the replacement market. That's why we reduced the number of turboprops by 250 in our latest outlook compared to last year."

EVO

Meijer might be right that current turboprops have been around for some time. ATR has been around for over 40 years, but it has consistently updated its 42-family. The French/Italian airframer has been working on the EVO model for over two years now, but ATR is in the same boat as Embraer when it comes to propulsion: it hasn't been able to find a suitable next-generation engine that meets its requirements.

In Paris, ATR and RTX announced the next step in their collaboration on hybrid-electric propulsion technology coupled to the Pratt & Whitney Canada PW127XT. In September, the OEMs were awarded funding under Europe's Clean Aviation program to develop technology for new regional aircraft. Eventually, this will result in the ATR EVO that should enter service around 2035. Nathalie Tarnaud Laude stressed this is still in line with the original plan, although ATR said in 2023 that the EVO could be available by 2030. "You say we are wasting time, I say we are gaining time. First, the technology needs to mature and prove itself. Our planning is very clear, and we work towards EIS [entry into service] in 2035, but first, we need to take the right steps. It's not just about the latest technology and sustainability: our customers demand cost-effective aircraft. It makes no sense to launch an aircraft that is unaffordable to our customers and nobody wants."

Deutsche Aircraft

It's not just ATR pursuing a new, advanced turboprop. In Germany, Deutsche Aircraft rolled out the first test aircraft of its D328eco in May which should change regional connectivity. With just 40 seats, the aircraft is smaller than the ATR. It will also be available as a Search & Rescue plane, flying ambulance, VIP, cargo plane or even as a firefighter. PrivatAir has been announced as the

▼ The OEM rolled out its first text aircraft in May. PrivatAir has been announced as the launch customer, but Deutsche Aircraft says it has more undisclosed customers for the multi-role version Deutsche Aircraft

DEUTSCHE AIRCRAFT

DASH 8 - 400
DE HAVILLAND AIRCRAFT OF CANADA
DH CANADA

▲ **Production of the Dash 8-A400 was suspended in 2021, but will the type re-enter production? Time will tell** De Havilland Canada

launch customer, but Deutsche Aircraft (part of Sierra Nevada Corporation) says it has more undisclosed customers for the multi-role version.

CEO Nico Neumann foresees strong demand: "There is a huge replacement market, as some 3.000 aircraft are getting close to 30 years now. We offer a modern turboprop with a speed of 324kts and an altitude of FL300 that flies faster and higher than older ones. This gets us on par with regional jets but at a 30 to 40% lower fuel burn. Regional operators are very sensitive to operating costs, so if they can save 30%, they are happy to do that."

The D328eco should enter service in 2027. Neumann notes there is interest in various markets, including India. "This is not our biggest market, but a growth market, notably from smaller, regional airports. We have high hopes for North America, where our aircraft could replace older regional jets like the ERJ-135 and -145. There is no obvious successor to these aircraft. Our D328eco saves on fuel costs and offers maximum comfort."

Dash 8

Many turboprop operators have their eyes set on Alberta (Canada) to see what De Havilland Canada will do: will they restart production of the Dash 8-400 that was suspended in 2021, when the Bombardier production site in Downsview (Toronto) was closed? Will there be a new version or maybe even a completely new turboprop?

Senior Vice President of Marketing, Ryan DeBrusk, said in Farnborough last year that DHC would decide in early 2025. That hasn't happened, he said in June in Paris, but plans have progressed through intense discussions with airlines, lessors and financiers. "We are now at the tail end of discussions with 54 customers on our project strategy council, not just De Havilland customers, but also ATR operators. There is a clear interest in what the next Dash 8 could be. We received lots of input on areas such as aircraft size, different technical characteristics, future technology and the time when this may be available. There is still space for a second turboprop manufacturer, that's what customers keep telling us. They want choice," he said.

"We want to make sure we have the right business case before we launch. We want to make sure that we have the supply chain available. We will not rush. Our objective is to have an aircraft with much lower maintenance costs and lower fuel burn. We must look where the aircraft needs further refinement and improvements, and we are in deep discussions with Pratt & Whitney about what could be possible. When we do launch, it must have the ability to step-change and advance as technology advances. This is a long-term project we are looking to launch," DeBrusk continued. A decision should be made next year, but availability is not expected until 2028 and depends on when De Haviland (DHC) has its new De Havilland Field near Alberta up and running after-ground works commence this year.

In the meantime, De Havilland tries to get as many grounded Dash 8-400s back in the air as possible. At Farnborough last year, it launched a repurchase and refurbishment program, clinching All Nippon Airways as a customer for seven aircraft. Others have been placed with customers in Africa, South Asia and South America. "Our aim is to keep them flying. We have now purchased 41 Dash 8s, of which 13 will return to service after completing refurbishments and checks. Another ten to 12 aircraft are under work in progress and will be inducted in MROs. The effect is that the value of the 8-400 has gone up by 35%."

If the various projects of startups like Heart, Aura, Maeve or Elysian succeed, we could see even more next-generation hybrid-electric and full-electric 'turboprops' in the market in some ten years from now. Propellers might be perceived as noisy and dangerous, but the way technology progresses towards the open rotor concept that could be adopted by Airbus is another indication that a propeller-powered aircraft isn't something of the past. It's back to the future.

▼ **An ANA Wings Dash 8-Q400 starts its take off roll at Tokyo Narita International Airport - RJAA / NRT.** Charles Mason

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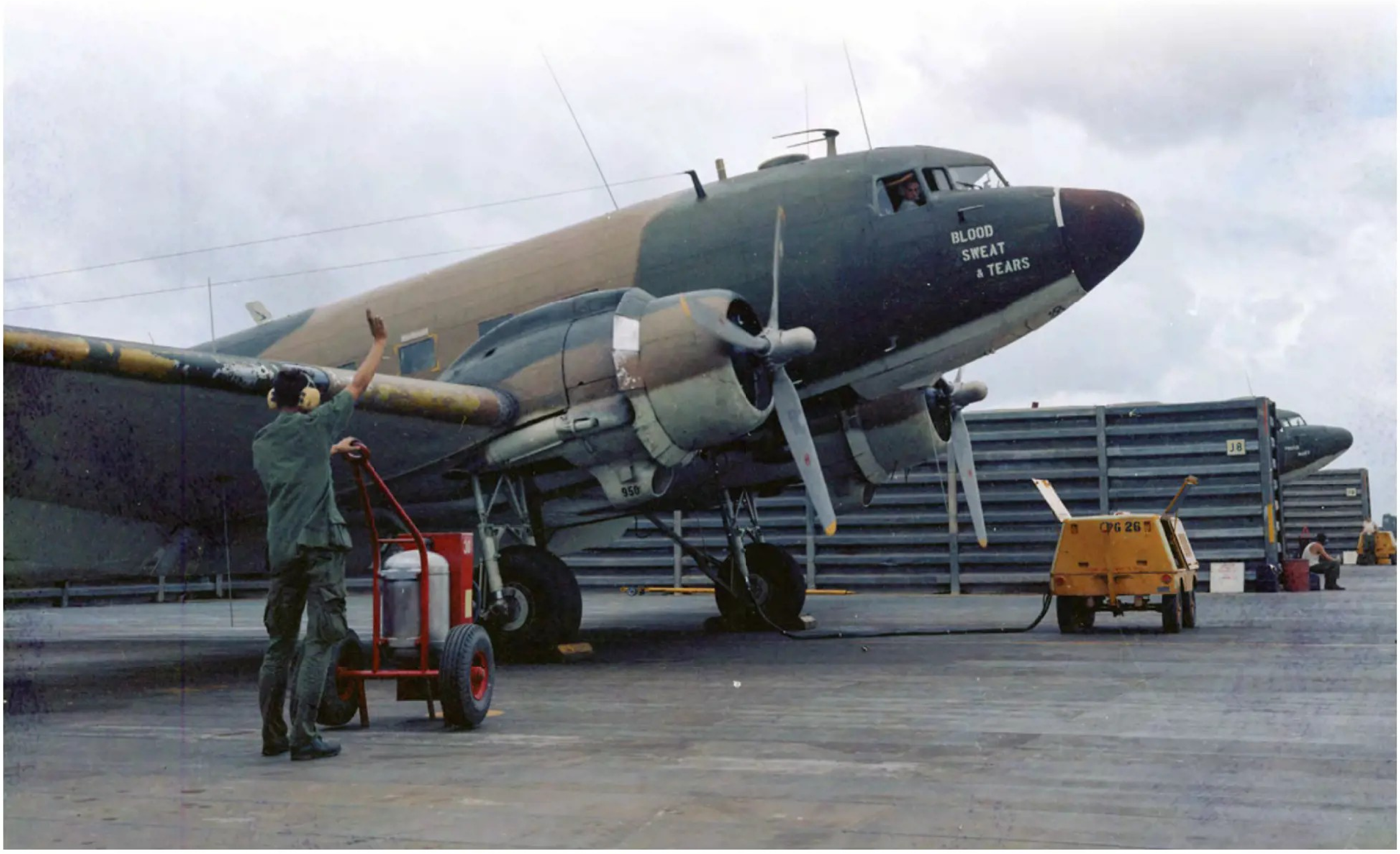
AN UNCOMMON WAR

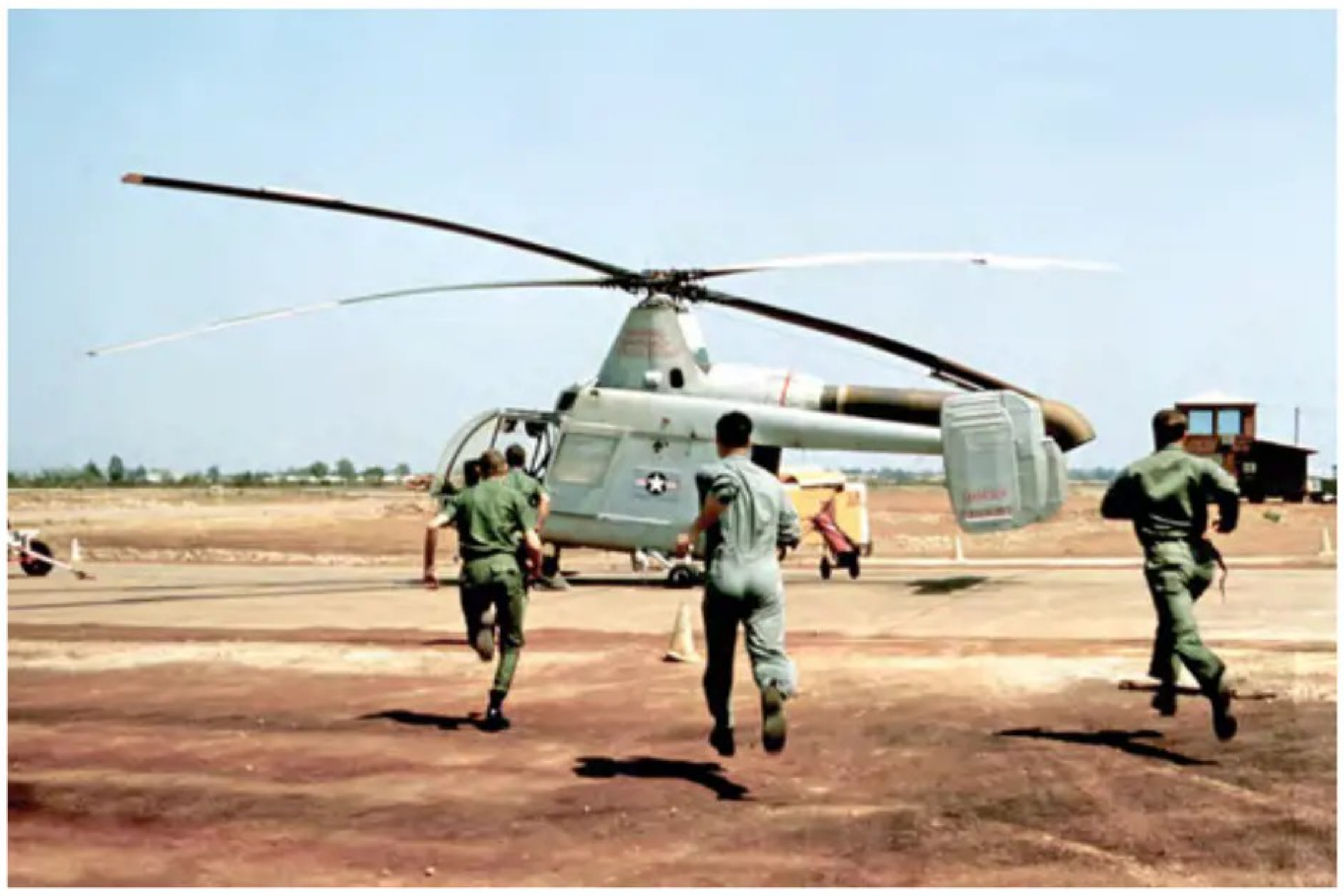
Aviation News shares views of the USAF operating across Southeast Asia during 13 years of "fighting a war with no front lines" in Vietnam



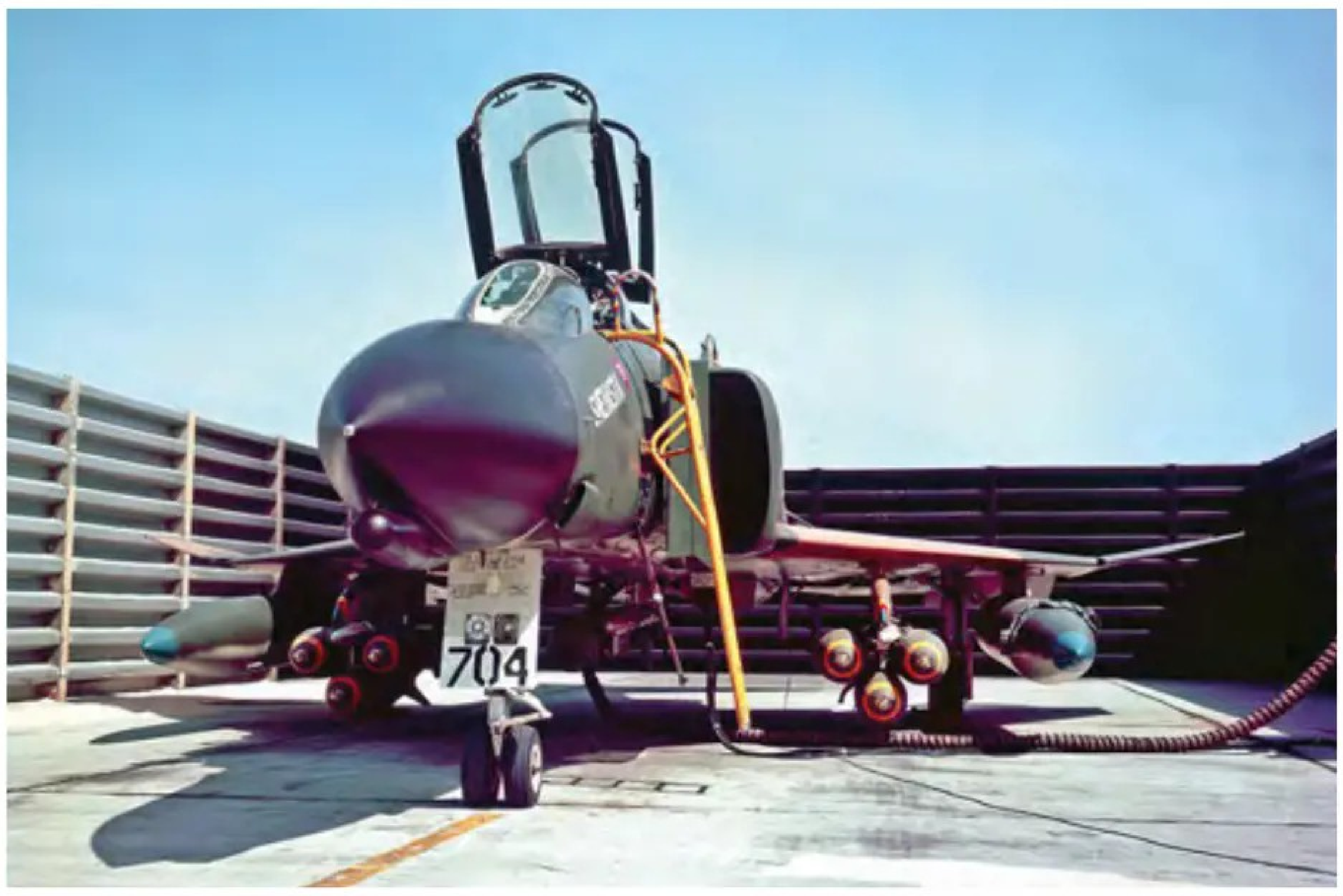
Douglas EC-47 42-100950 *Blood, Sweat & Tears* of the 361st Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron starts up at Phù Cát Air Base in South Vietnam on November 22, 1969, with Airman 1st Class Ronald Reynold giving the starting instructions and standing by with a fire extinguisher unit. An advanced electronic warfare version of the C-47A developed during the mid-1960s for the airborne radio direction finding role in Southeast Asia, the type was nicknamed the 'Electric Goon'. Note the various aerials and antennas attached to the wings and fuselage All images US Department of Defense via the US National Archives

Nobody ever imagined the Vietnam conflict would escalate to the level it did when the first USAF unit was deployed in November 1961 under the auspices of "providing on-the-spot training" for the then nascent South Vietnamese Air Force. Boasting around 150 airmen and 16 near obsolete North American Aviation T-28 Trojans at Bien Hoa, to the north of Saigon, under the cover of secrecy, this mission soon turned to "advice in combat" then "combat training sorties". Almost immediately these were indistinguishable from direct combat.

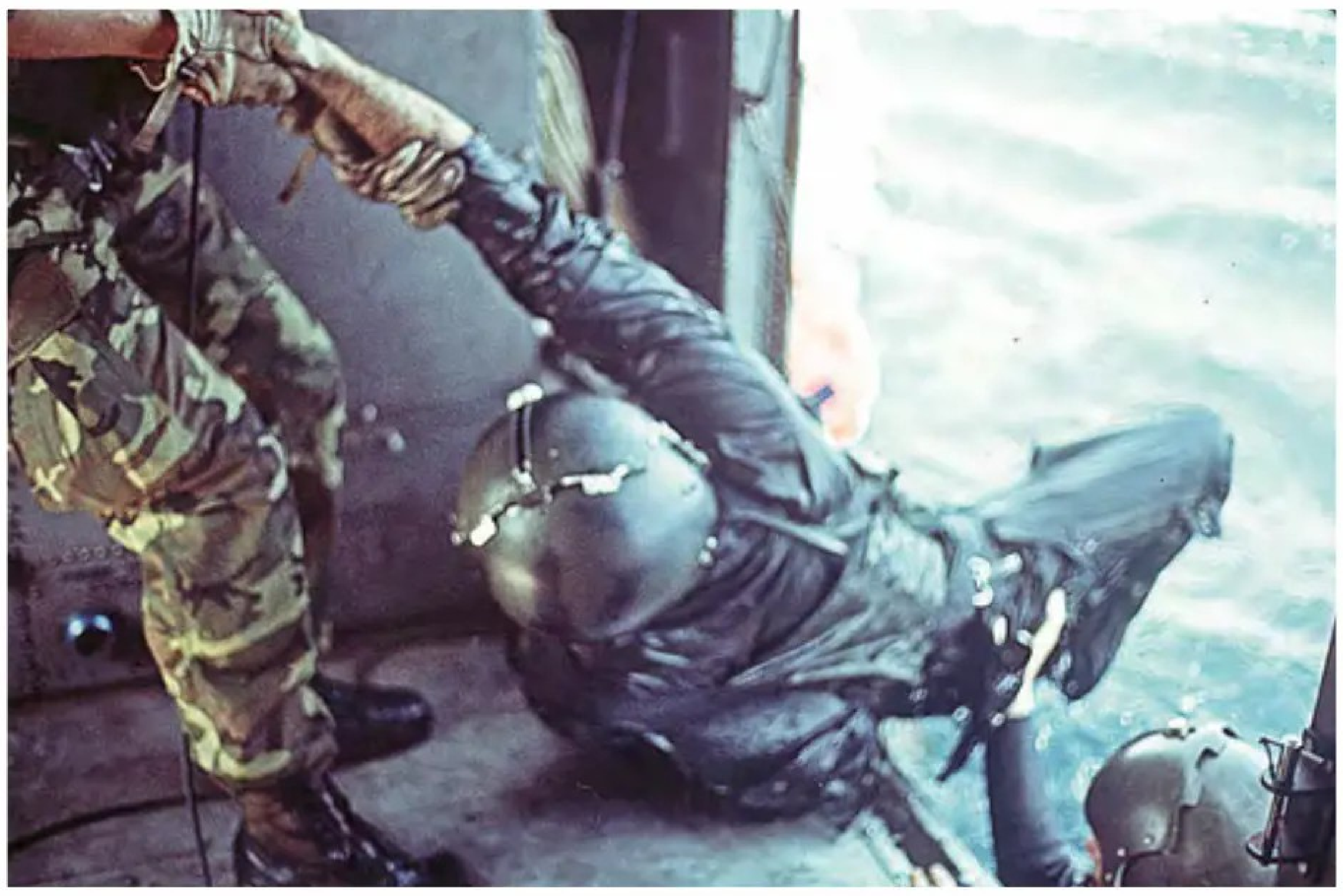
At its peak, USAF presence in Southeast Asia reached an unprecedented 95,000 personnel and 1,800 aircraft. All told, during 13 years of war, America flew more than five million sorties across South Vietnam, North Vietnam, northern and southern Laos and Cambodia, losing 2,251 aircraft – 1,737 to hostile action and 514 in accidents. Of these, 2,197 were fixed-wing aircraft and the remainder rotary-wing. In all, some 2,580 USAF personnel were killed in action. These are some of the men and machines involved. AN



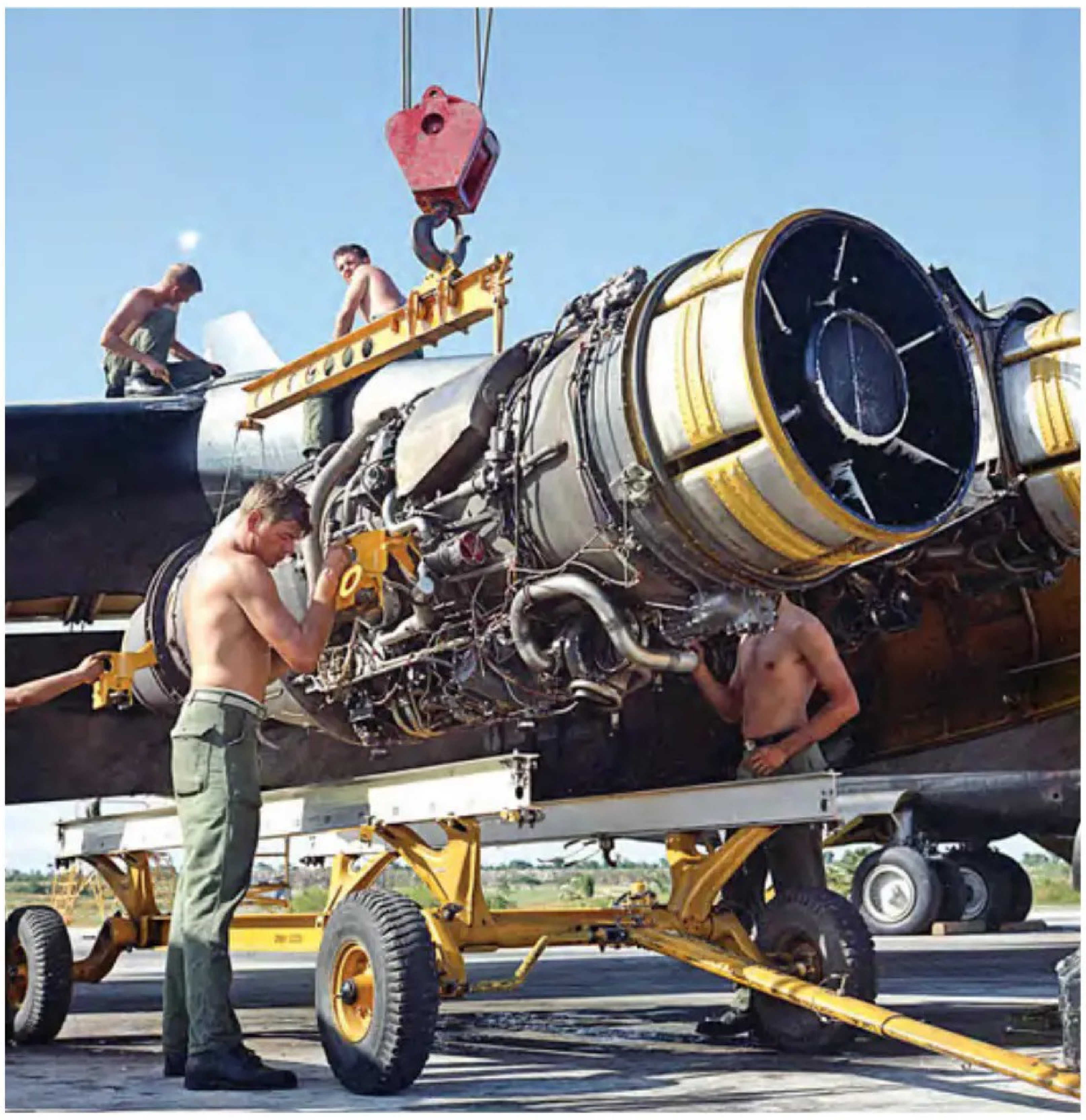
The crew of Kaman HH-43B Huskie 59-1590 scramble at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB) in northeastern Thailand after being alerted to a downed aircraft in late 1965. The Huskie was one of six examples assigned to Detachment 5 of the 38th Air Rescue Squadron (later Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron) that sat on 24-hour alert. Nicknamed *Naked Fanny*, 59-1590 was later shot down during a search and rescue mission for the pilot of a 35th Tactical Fighter Wing, 614th Tactical Fighter Squadron North American F-100D Super Sabre, serial 55-3516/VP *Cherry Girl*, who crashed near Phan Rang in South Vietnam returning from a mission on June 26, 1969. The F-100 pilot, Captain John Casper, and the Huskie crew all survived.



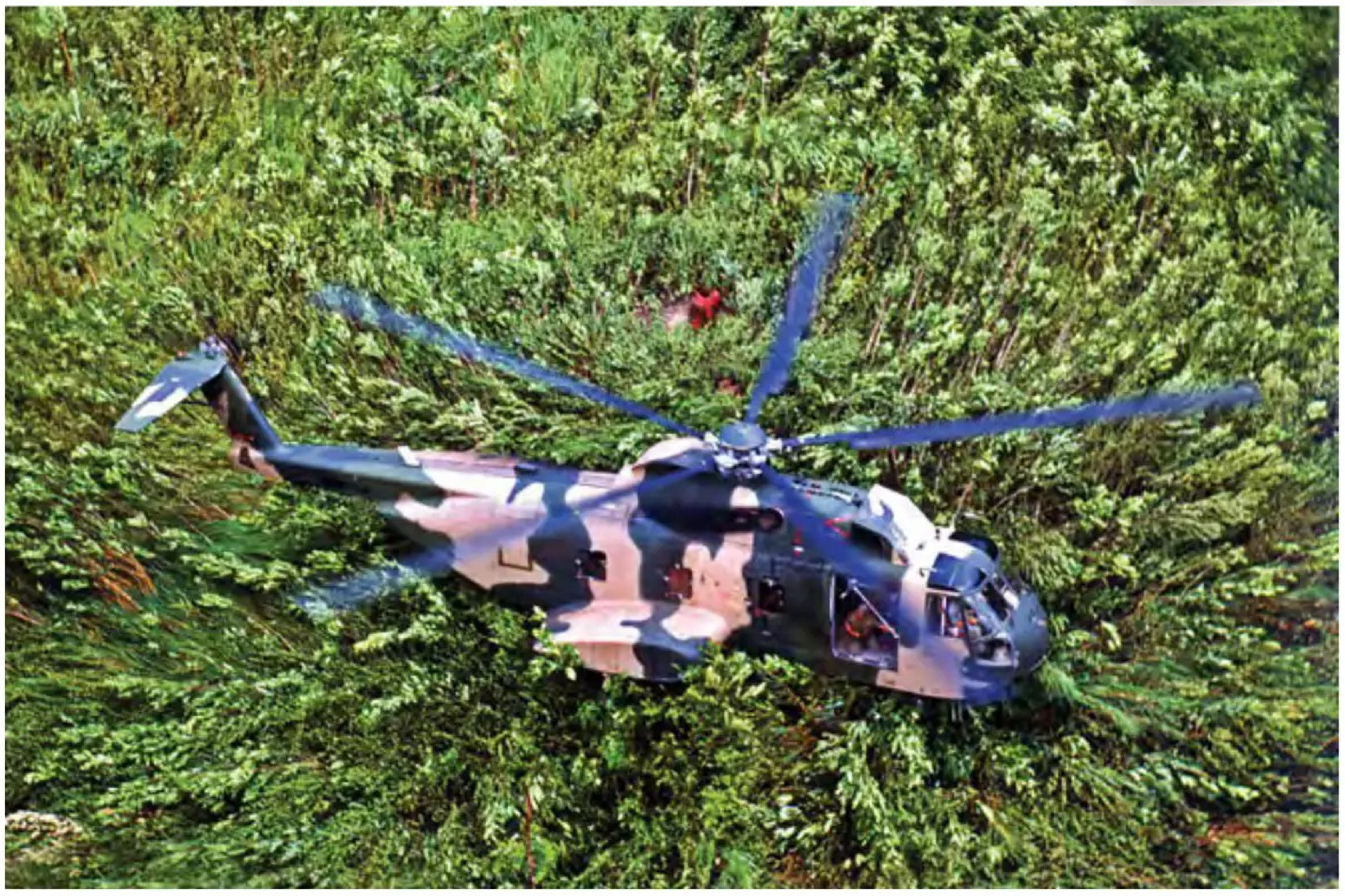
McDonnell Douglas F-4C Phantom II 64-0704/XN *Shehasta* awaits its next sortie in a revetment at Cam Ranh Bay, armed with six 750lbs Mk 117 freefall bombs sometime in late 1969. On strength with the 12th Tactical Fighter Wing's (TFW), 559th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS), the aircraft was the personal mount of the unit's then commander, Lt Col Lowell Shearera, a leader noted for his competence and devotion to duty



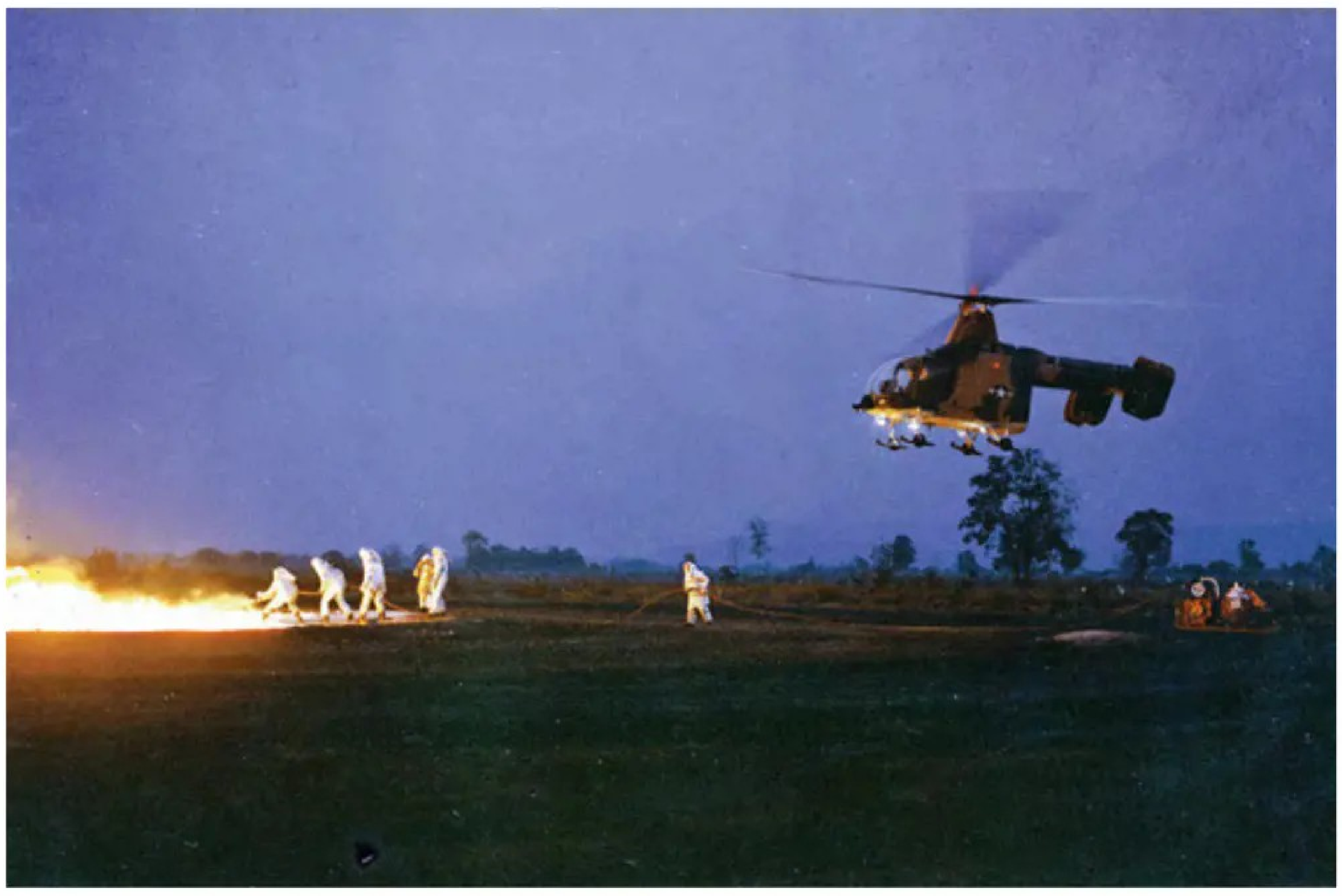
This image captured by SSgt Paul E Hagerty shows Maj Paul D Lambrides, a F-4D Phantom II pilot from the Da Nang-based 366th TFW's 390th TFS, being pulled aboard a 37th ARSS Sikorsky HH-3E Jolly Green Giant on March 17, 1968. His backseater, 1st Lt Jack L Tavenner, is on the right. Having ejected over the Gulf of Tonkin after taking enemy fire during an armed recce mission in 66-8780/LF, both were back flying the next day



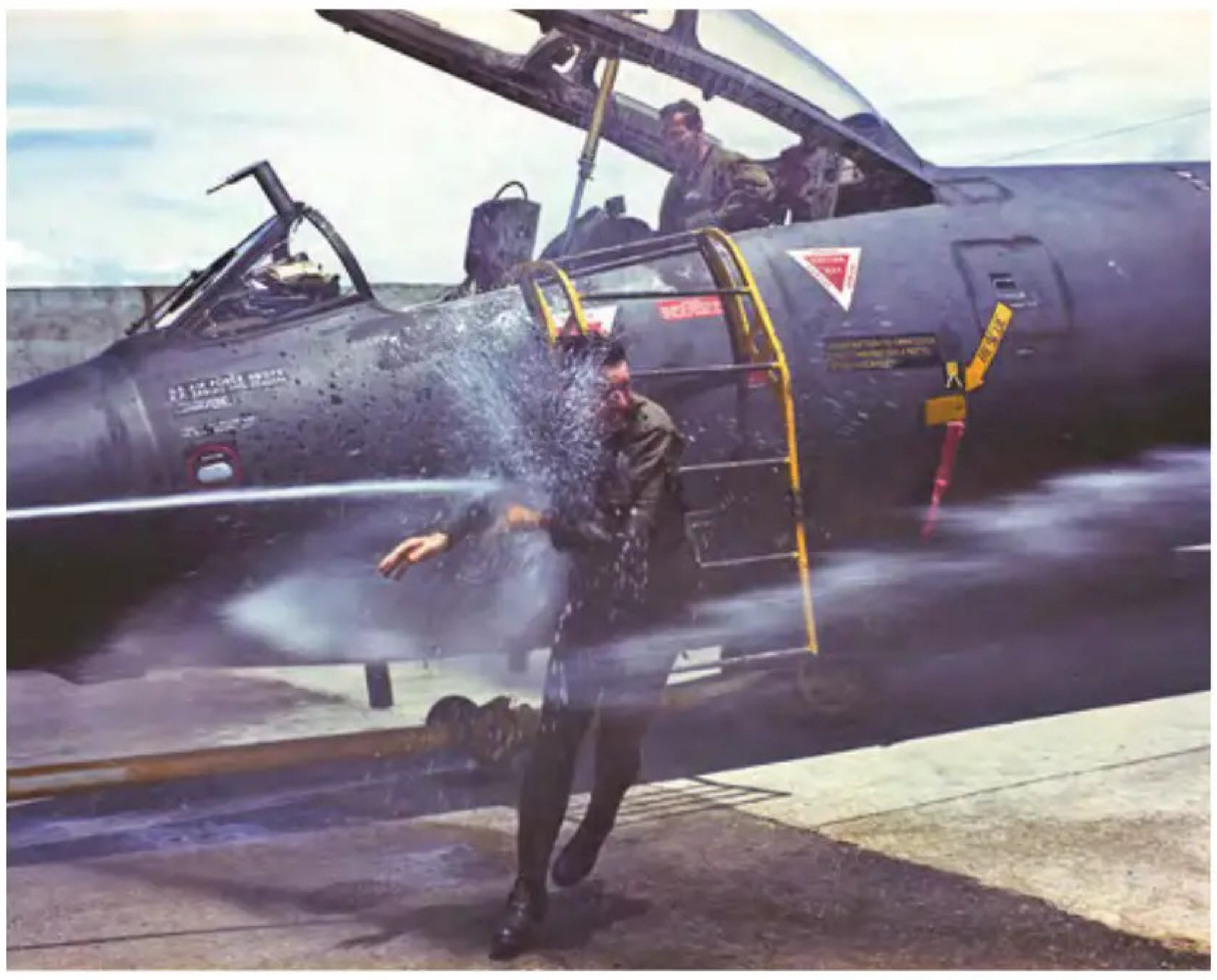
Maintenance personnel prepare to remove a Pratt & Whitney J57 engine from a 'big belly' Boeing B-52D Stratofortress at Anderson AFB on Guam during 1967. Deployed under Operation Arclight, B-52s flew 126,615 sorties across Southeast Asia between 1965 and 1973 for the loss of 31 examples – 15 to hostile fire



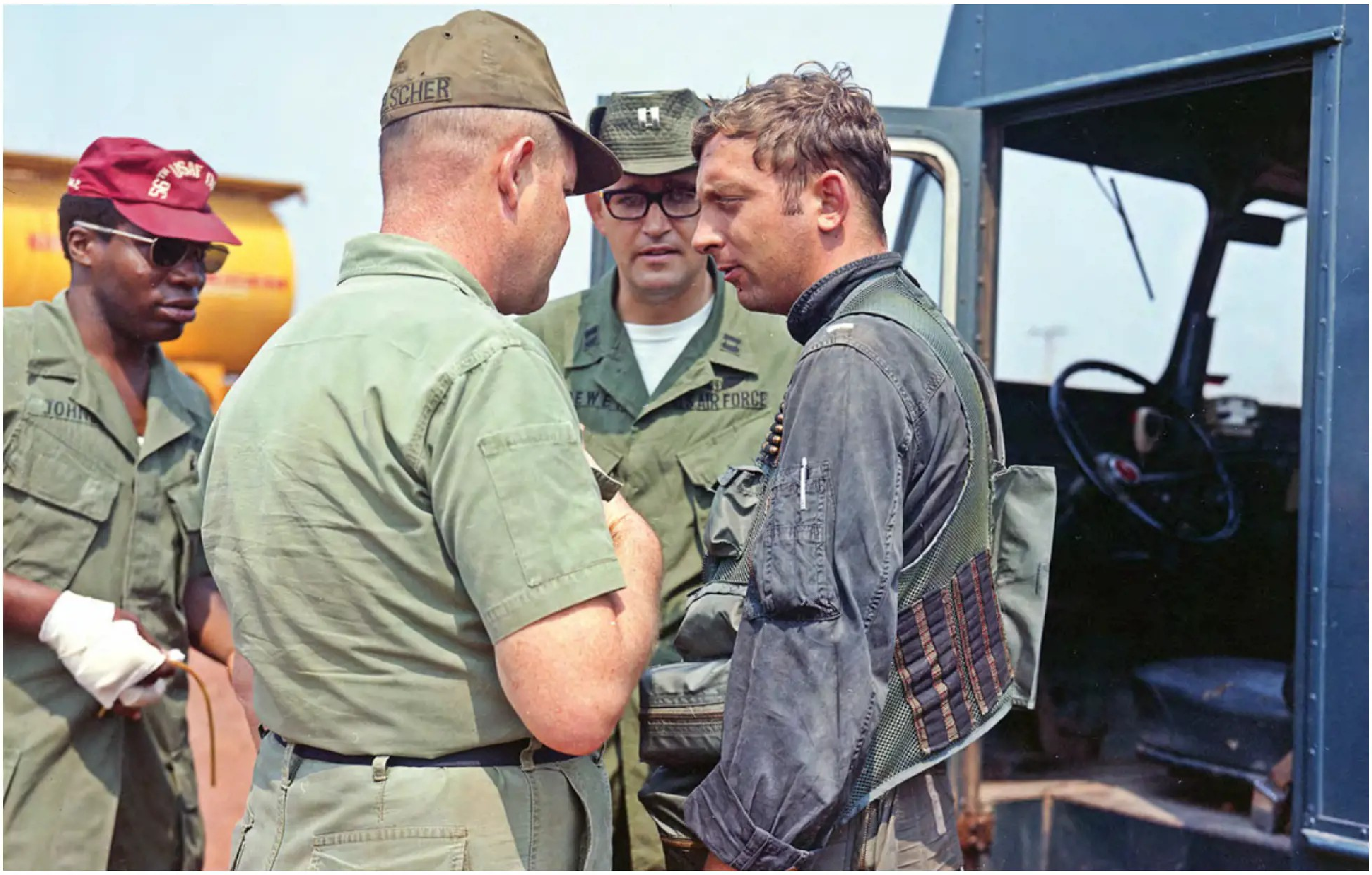
Sikorsky CH-3C Jolly Green Giant 63-9681 of the 20th Helicopter Squadron delivers troops to the jungle during Operation Pony Express, a series of covert missions to provide air support/transport material for indigenous soldiers operating across the Laotian and North Vietnamese borders between 1965 and 1969. Later transferred to the 21st Special Operations Squadron, 63-9681 was shot down by ground fire on August 13, 1970, near Ubon RTAFB, killing three of the four crew



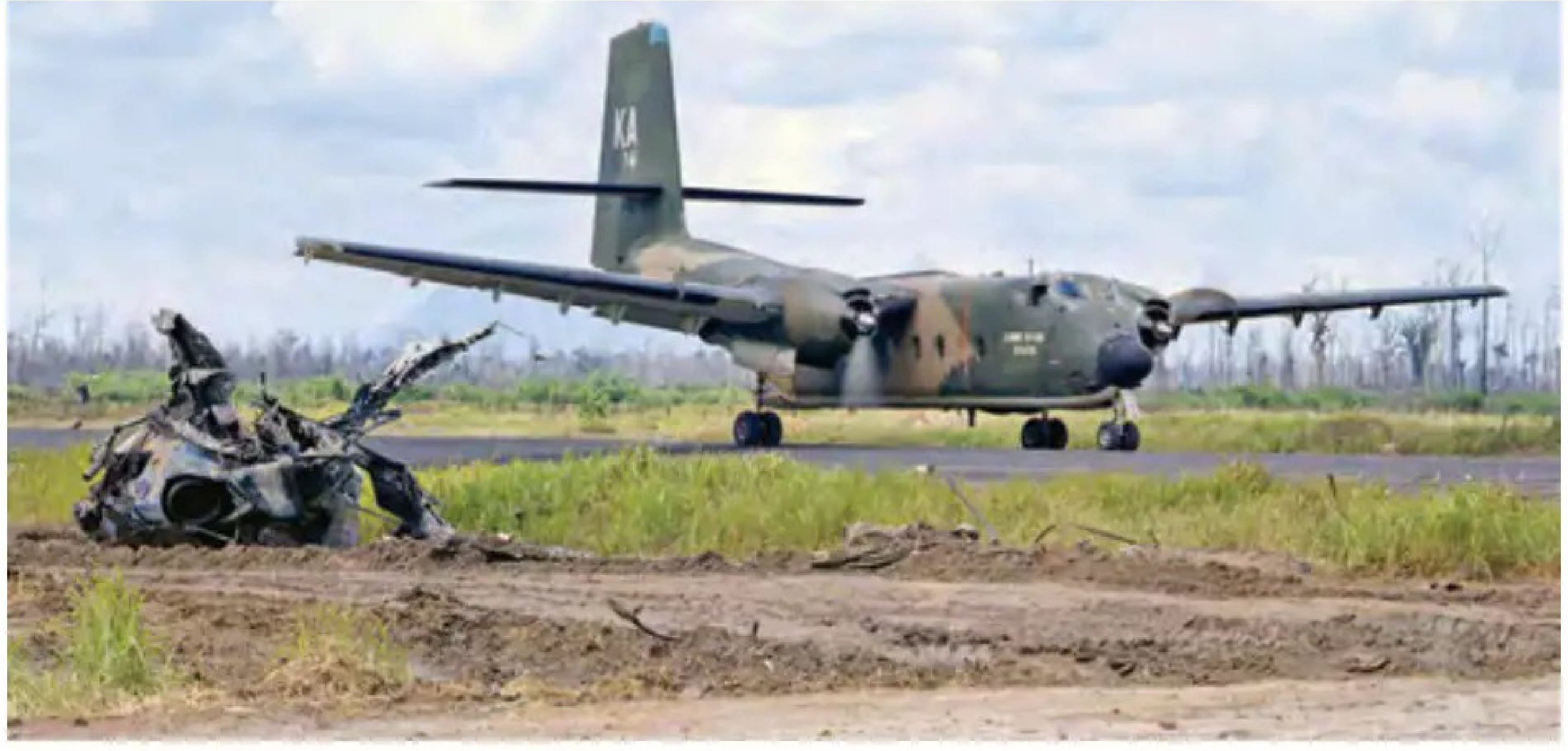
SSgt J Evans captured this image of a Kaman HH-43B Huskie – believed to be either 59-1549 or 59-1574 – of the 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron (ARRS) Detachment 2, supporting members of the 355th Combat Support Group during firefighting practice at Takhli RTAFB in February 1970



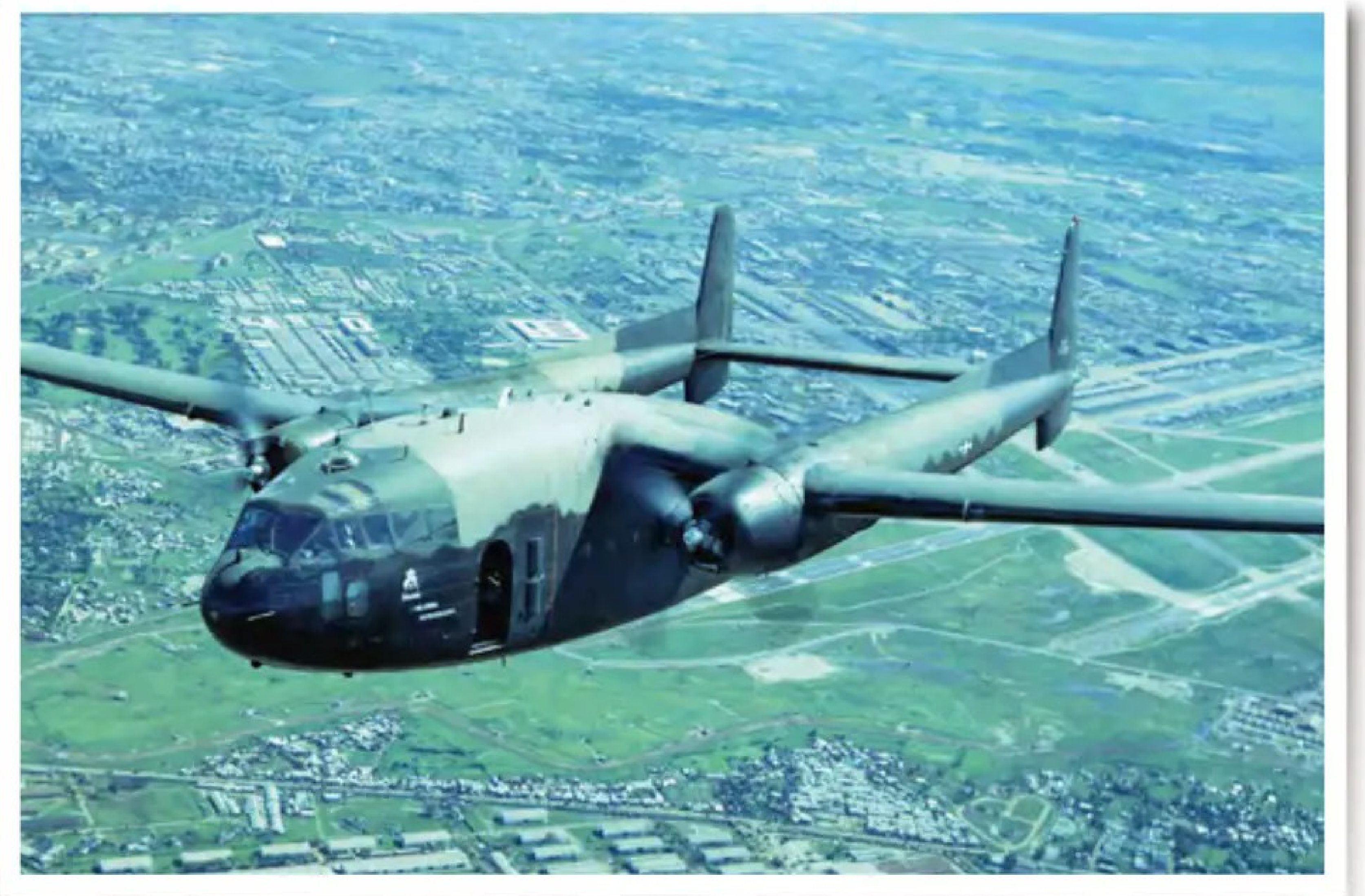
Lt Col John Prodan of the 460th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing's Detachment 1 gets a traditional welcome home at Tan Son Nhut in July 1971, following his final mission in the Martin RB-57E Canberra, as his navigator/reconnaissance equipment operator, Maj Kenneth Steinharter, looks on. In 1968, for Project Patricia Lynn, 55-4257 was modified by General Dynamics with a nose-mounted 36in forward oblique camera, a panoramic camera, infrared sensors and terrain-following radar for all-weather reconnaissance and post-attack damage assessment day and night



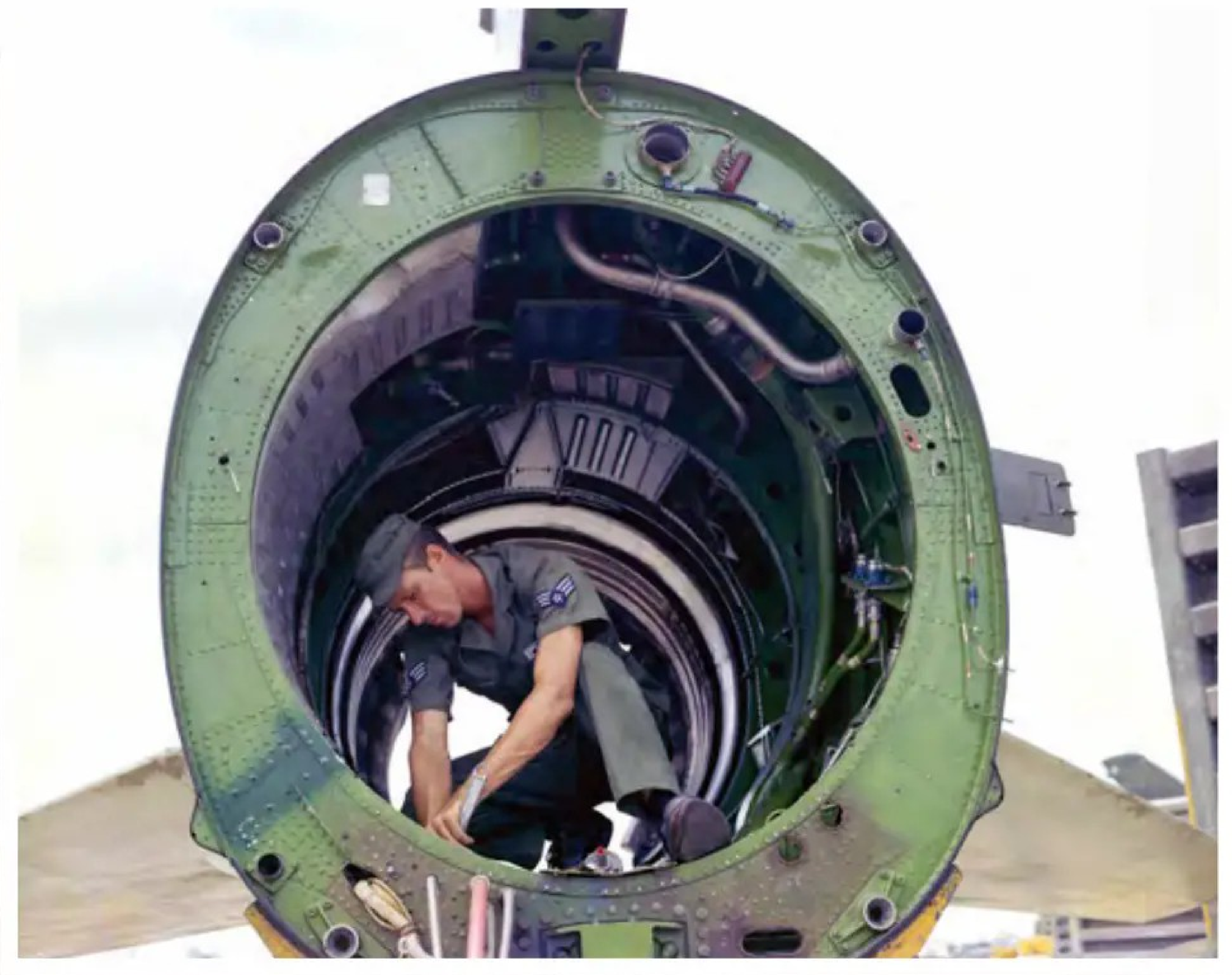
First Lt Gordon Breault, a McDonnell Douglas F-4D Phantom II weapons systems operator with the 8th TFW's 497th TFS, discusses details of his rescue with personnel at Nakhon Phanom RTAFB in Thailand on February 14, 1969. Hit by ground fire while pulling off a target during a night mission over southern Laos, Breault was rescued by a Sikorsky HH-53C Super Jolly Green Giant from the 40th ARRS. There is no evidence that his pilot, Lt Col Stanley Clark, ejected from the F-4D and his body has never been recovered



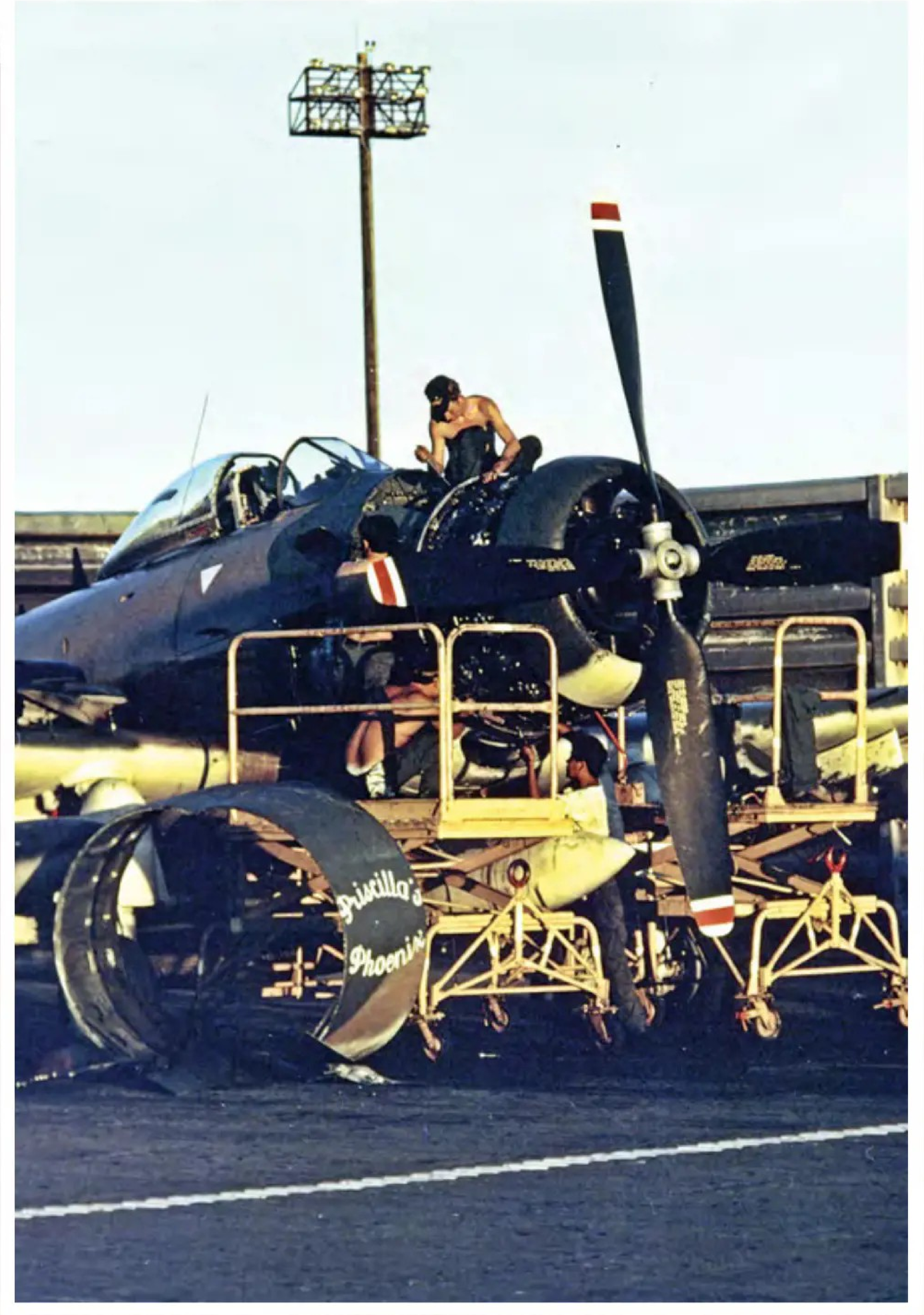
A de Havilland Canada C-7A Caribou, 63-9741/KA *Lone Star State*, taxies past the wreck of an unknown type at Katum Special Forces Camp in South Vietnam during a resupply mission in support of the Cambodian offensive in May 1970



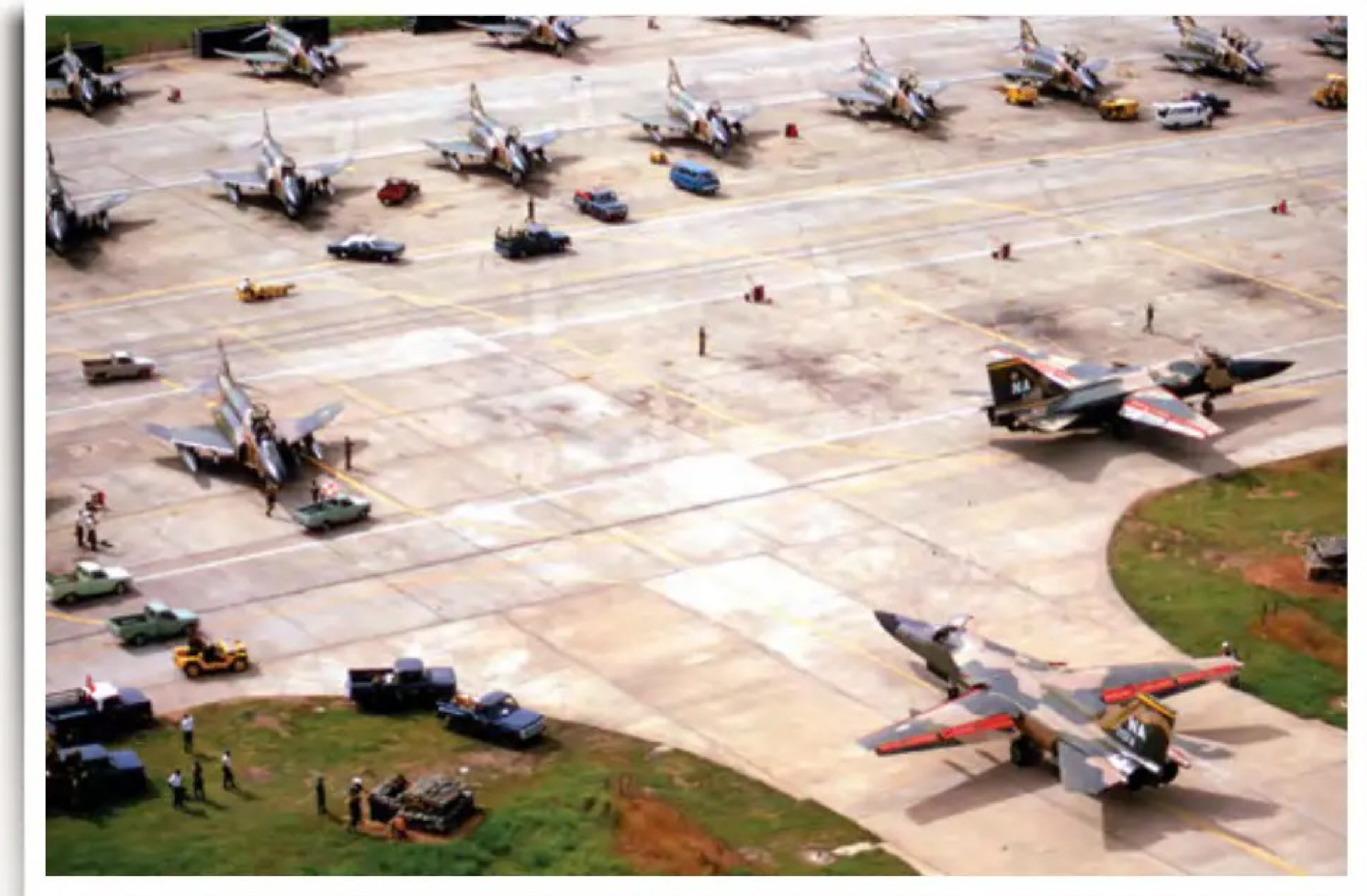
Fairchild AC-119G Shadow 53-3205 *Oakland Representative* of the 17th SOS out of Nha Trang AB passes over Tan Son Nhut on October 29, 1969. One of 26 C-119s converted to gunships under Modification 108 in 1968 to replace the vulnerable and underpowered Douglas AC-47 Spooky in the close air support role, as well as supplementing Lockheed AC-130 Spectre. It was passed over to the South Vietnamese Air Force in August 1971



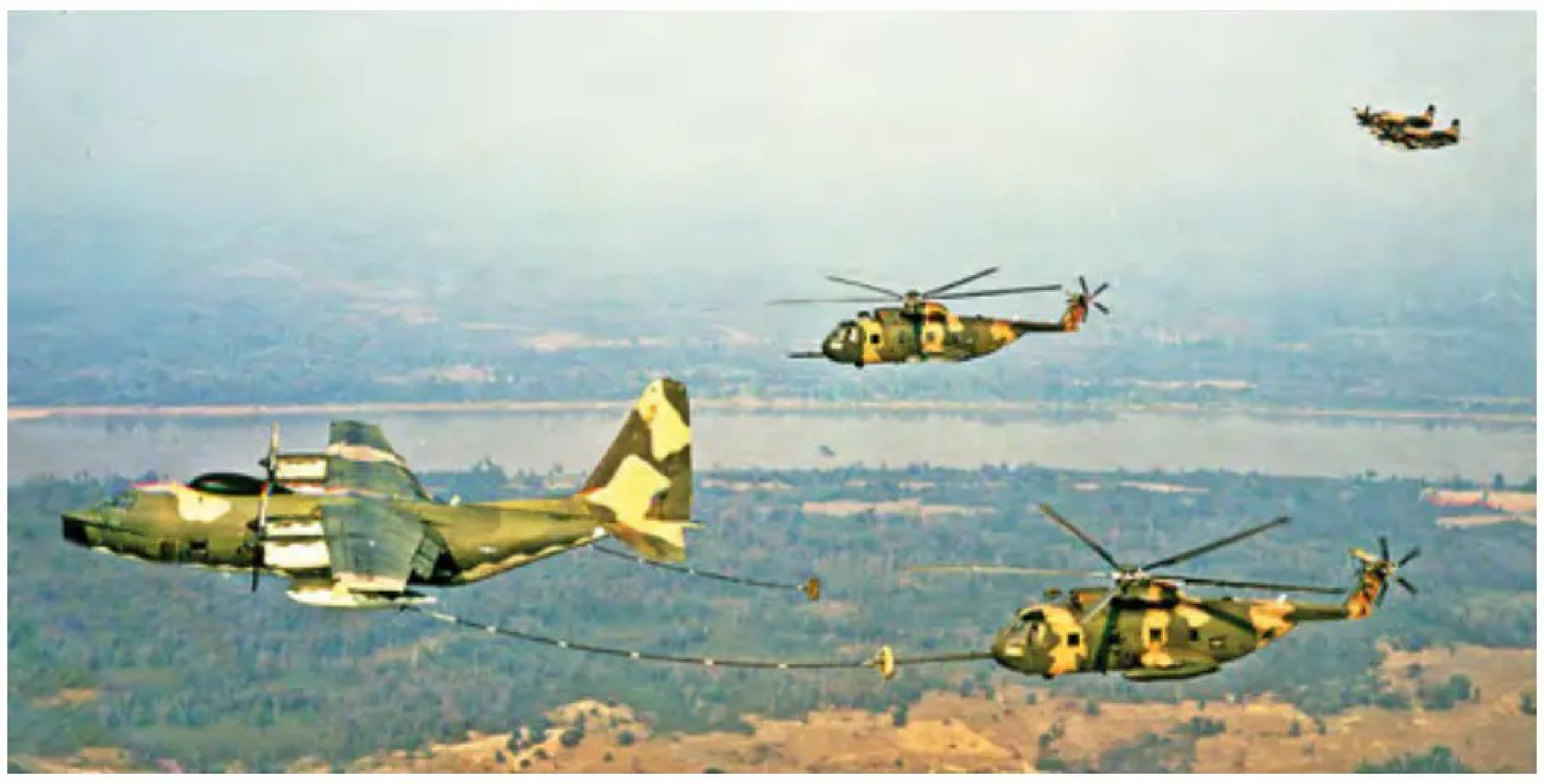
Sgt Richard Williams of the 354th TFS working on the hydraulic lines of a Republic F-105 Thunderchief at Takhli RTAFB on September 15, 1969. This image, captured by Airman 1st Class Steven Wilson, reveals the intricacies of the Mach 2-capable fighter-bomber



Ground crew perform maintenance on Douglas A-1J Skyraider 52-142028 *Priscilla's Phoenix* at Nakhon Phanom in October 1972. On strength with the 56th's 1st SOS, this Skyraider – a former US Navy machine pulled out of retirement for the USAF along with the rest of the squadron's remaining examples – was transferred to the Republic of Vietnam Air Force the following month



A pair of General Dynamic F-111A Aardvarks, 67-0074/NA and 67-0075/NA, of the 474th TFW taxiing back to a packed flightline at Takhli RTAFB after an Operation Linebacker mission over Southeast Asia in September 1972



SSgt Bobby G Burnes caught this view of a Sikorsky HH-3E Jolly Green Giant of the 40th ARSS taking fuel from a Fulton surface-to-air recovery system-equipped Lockheed HC-130P Hercules over Southeast Asia during a combat search and rescue mission in February 1969. Douglas AH-1H Skyraiders, nicknamed 'Sandys', of the 56th Special Operations Wing's 602nd Special Operations Squadron provide escort

Remembering the rainbow airline

Jose Salgueiro looks back on the Brazilian airline whose aircraft crossed the skies with the colours of the rainbow on their tail fins. Founded by Omar Fontana with the name Sadia Transportes Aereos, it was only after a name change to Transbrasil and the adoption of a new image in 1979, that the airline achieved worldwide fame.

The history of Sadia Transportes Aéreos is deeply intertwined with the story of its founder, Omar Fontana. While still studying to become a pilot, Omar founded the company with the goal of transporting meat from his father Atílio Fontana's slaughterhouse, located in the interior of Santa Catarina, to Brazil's main capitals. The first flights took place with a Douglas DC-3 chartered from Panair do Brasil, which remained parked on weekends at Congonhas Airport in São Paulo. Omar suggested to his father that they take advantage of those idle days to lease the aircraft and distribute the slaughterhouse's products by air. The idea was a huge success, and Sadia, which would become Brazil's largest food company, adopted the slogan 'By air to your home'.

In February 1954, Sadia acquired its first own DC-3 and began operating three round-trip daily flights between Joaçaba (SC) and São Paulo. The air transport company, Sadia Transportes Aéreos, was officially founded on January 5, 1955, with its first commercial flight taking place on March 16, 1956.

Expansion

Through an agreement with Real Aerovias, one of the largest airlines at the time, Sadia expanded its air network and, by 1960, was operating in five capitals, including Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and the newly built Brasília. As the new national capital was being built from scratch in a remote region, aviation became essential for its development, and airlines like Sadia directly benefited.

After Real Aerovias was acquired by Varig in 1961, Omar regained full control of Sadia Transportes Aéreos and expanded its fleet, incorporating 11 Douglas DC-3 and five Curtiss C-46 aircraft. He then

PT-TYP
TRANS BRASIL
BOEING 727

◢ The PT-TYP was a Boeing 727-100 in the QC 'Quick Change' or 'Convertible' version. It operated with Transbrasil between December 1976 and 1985, when it was sold to Evergreen International

TRANS BRASIL
PT-TEG

▲ Transbrasil operated a total of 19 Boeing 737-300 aircraft, starting in 1986

acquired Transportes Aéreos Salvador, expanding Sadia's operations to northern and northeastern Brazil. Sadia Transportes Aéreos began operating in 53 Brazilian cities using versatile aircraft like the DC-3, capable of landing in remote airports with limited infrastructure.

Starting in 1963, with the arrival of the new Handley Page Dart Heralds, the company began focusing on major routes, reducing its network to 28 cities and retiring older aircraft. In this phase, Sadia signed one of the first code share agreements in aviation history, transporting passengers from Braniff International flights from Viracopos Airport, in Campinas, to Congonhas Airport in São Paulo.

One of Omar Fontana's greatest achievements was securing Sadia a spot in the operation of the famous Rio-São Paulo Air Shuttle, created in 1959 as the world's first Air Shuttle. This route, one of the busiest and most profitable in the world, operated with boardings that required no reservation, and Sadia's entry into this market in 1965 cemented its role among the major national airlines.

The Jet-Era

The 1960s saw the rise of jet aircraft, with the first Brazilian airlines to operate jets being Vasp with the BAC One-Eleven in 1968 and Cruzeiro do Sul with the Boeing 727-100 in 1970. To keep up, Omar Fontana — who, in addition to being president of the company, was an experienced pilot — invested in the purchase of ten BAC One-Eleven series 500 aircraft with 94 seats. The first 'Jatão' (as it became known in Brazil) was delivered to Sadia in September 1970 and helped the company expand its network.

With the arrival of the jet age, Omar spearheaded a major overhaul of the company. He moved the company's headquarters to Brasília, renamed Sadia Transportes Aéreos to Transbrasil, and introduced a bold new visual identity. Inspired by the colourful aircraft of Braniff International, each plane received a unique livery celebrating Brazil's natural riches, such as 'Amazon' painted in shades of green, 'Coffee' in shades of brown, 'Wheat' in yellow tones, 'Sun' in orange, 'Water' in shades of blue, and 'Wine' in pink tones.

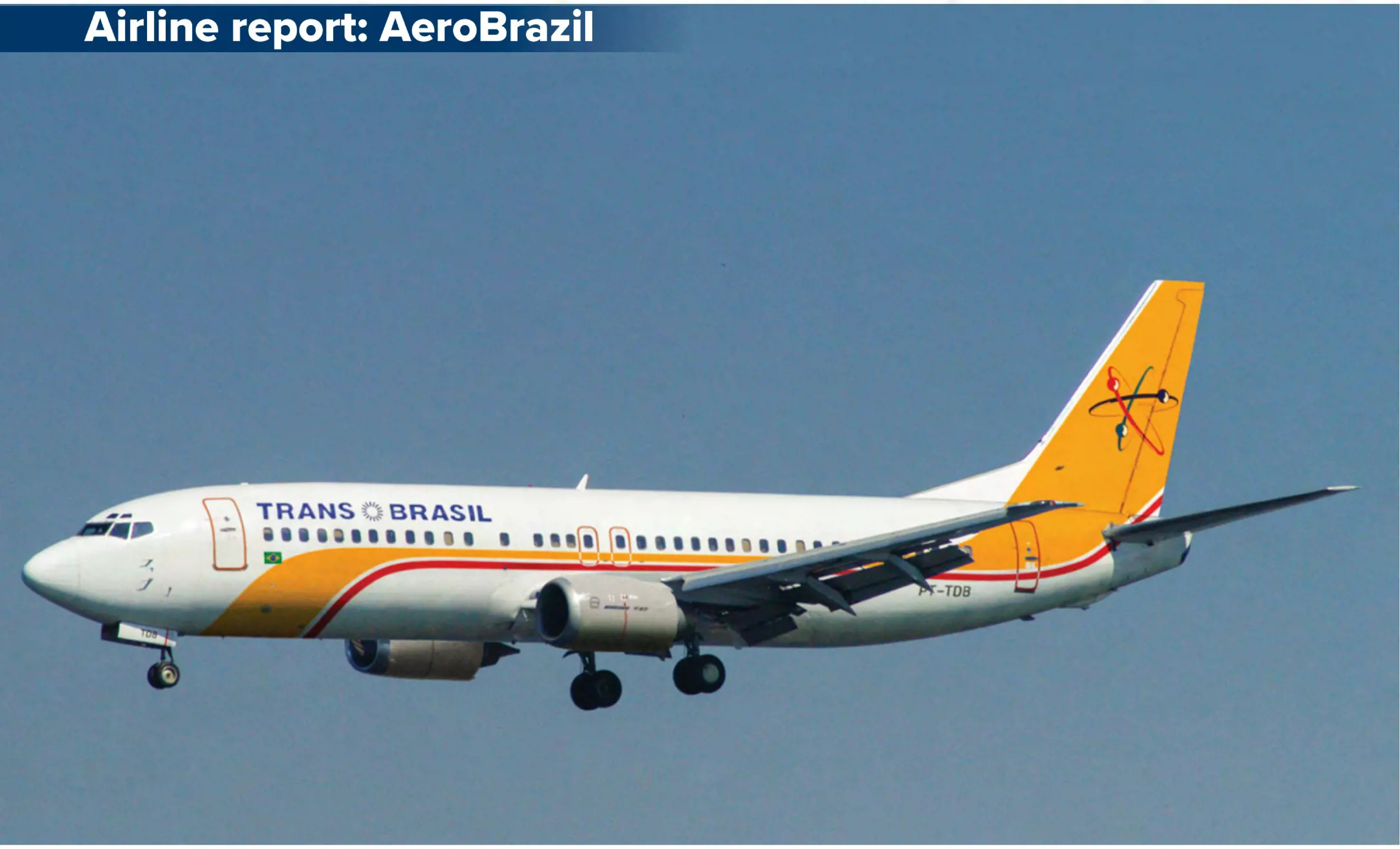
Shortly afterwards, the colour scheme was revised again to allow for a greater mix of colours, giving each aircraft a distinct identity. This new concept was named 'Colourful Energy', in tribute to various energy sources such as 'Petroleum Energy', 'Kinetic Energy', 'Nuclear Energy', 'Solar Energy', 'Wind Energy', and many others. With their extremely vibrant colours, the aircraft quickly became a major marketing success as they stood out in airports across Brazil.

First DC-10s of Brazil

In 1974, Varig received the McDonnell Douglas DC-10, the first widebody aircraft to operate in a Brazilian airline. That same year, Omar Fontana announced plans to purchase two widebody Airbus A300-B2 aircraft with 230 seats. However, the military government ruling Brazil at the time vetoed the plans to protect the country's main airline. Forced to pivot, Omar chose to invest in Boeing 727-

▼ This Boeing 707, with registration HR-AMF, operated for just over a year between July 1994 and September 1995, and never received Aerobrasil's full colour scheme

AeroBrasil Cargo
HR-AMF



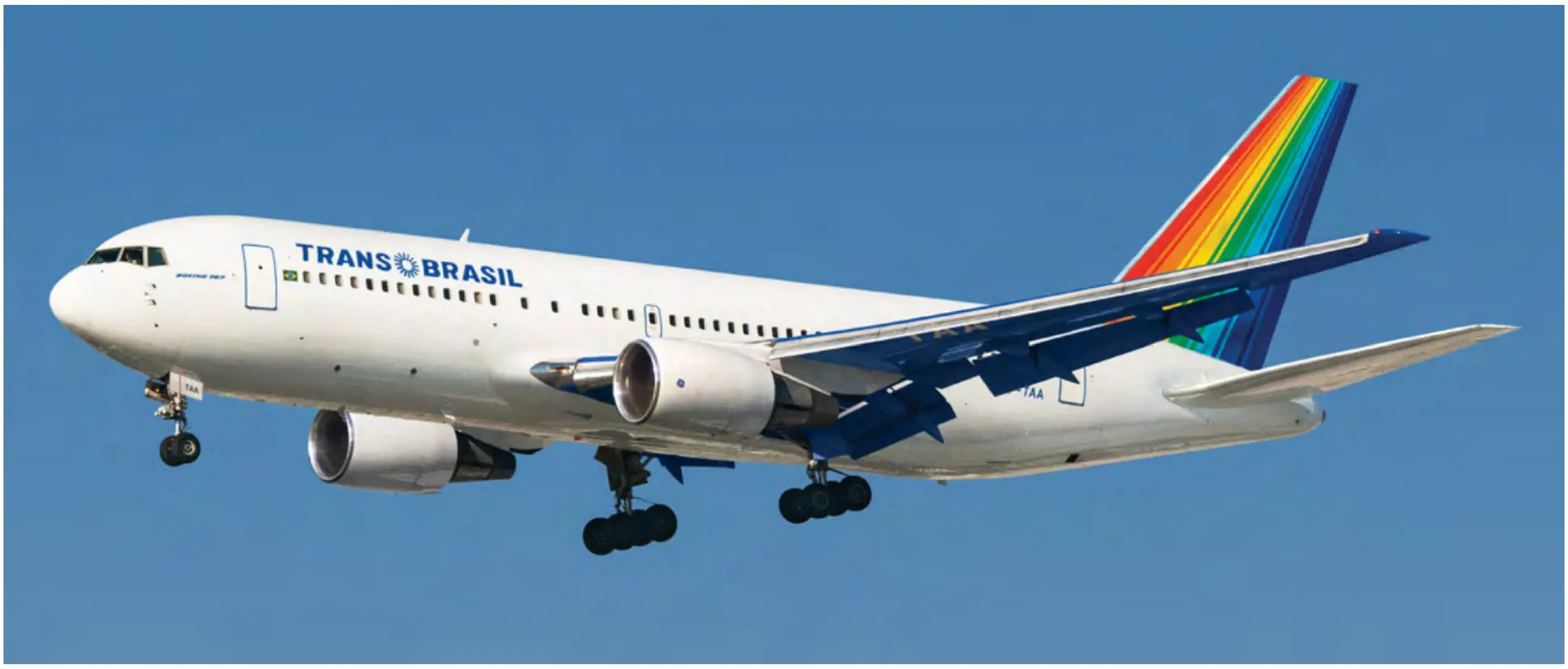
▲ In the mid-1990s, Transbrasil leased two Boeing 737-400 aircraft and operated them for six months in the colours of Futura International Airways before returning them to the Spanish airline

100 aircraft in a convertible version, which could quickly be reconfigured to carry either passengers or cargo. Soon, Transbrasil became the largest operator of this model in Brazil, with 22 aircraft.

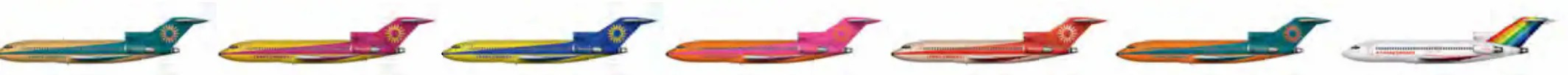
In the late 1970s, Transbrasil implemented a modern automated reservation system, inaugurated a new hangar in Brasília – which at the time became the largest in South America – and once again renewed its corporate image. The airline adopted the rainbow, inspired by Air France's recently updated colour scheme, as the standard livery on the tail of the entire fleet, while parts such as the wings and other fuselage details continued to feature unique colours on each aircraft.

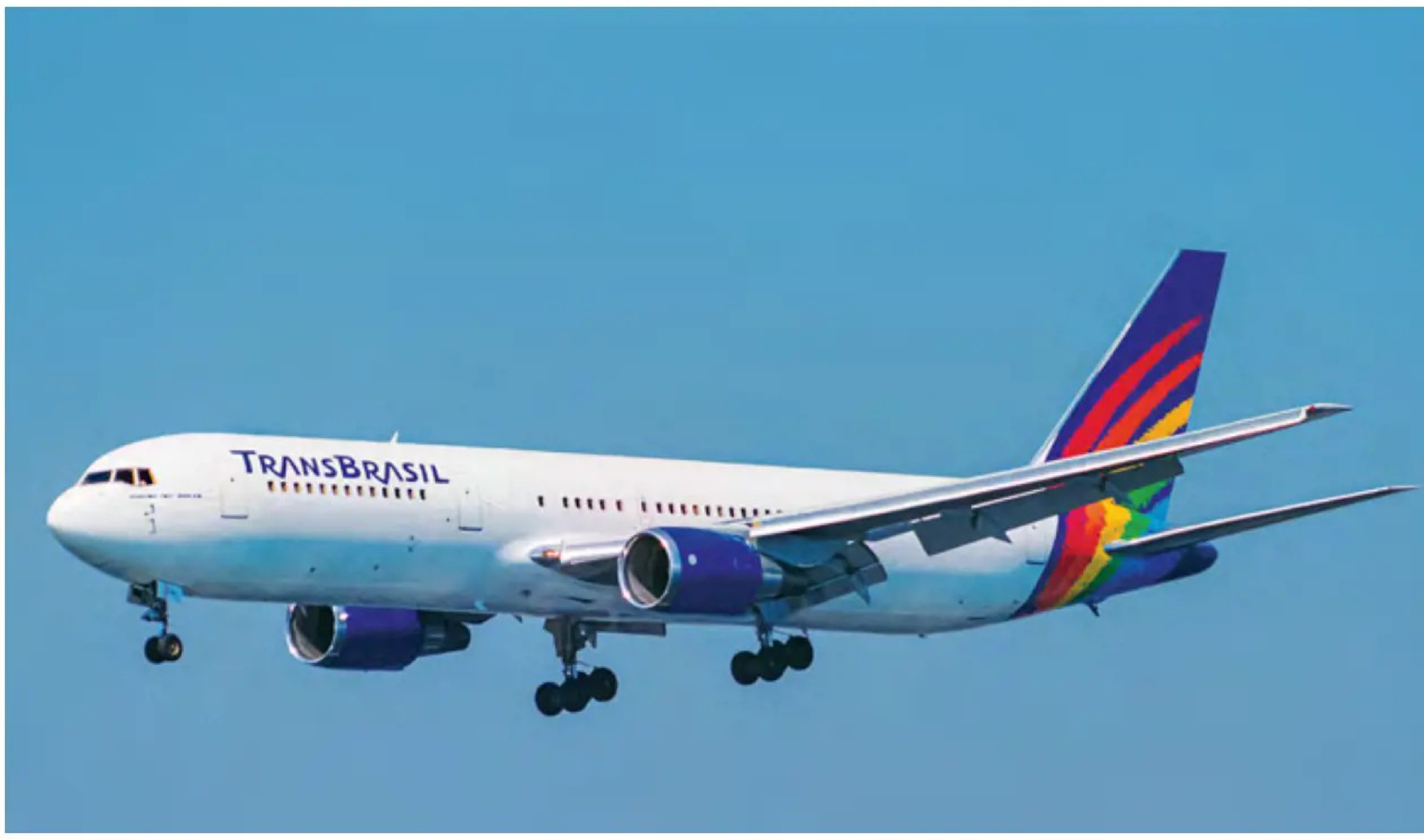
In a country as vast as Brazil, with a largely underdeveloped road and rail infrastructure, Omar Fontana recognised a great potential in the air cargo market. With this vision, he founded Aerobrasil in 1982 with an initial fleet of four Boeing 707s. Due to the success of its operations, the fleet grew significantly, and Aerobrasil remained active until the mid-1990s.

In 1983, Transbrasil received its first widebody aircraft straight from Boeing's factory in Seattle: three brand-new Boeing 767-200s. The first 767 of the 'Rainbow Airline' had its wings painted in blue, the second in orange and the third in green. Throughout the 1980s, Transbrasil standardised its fleet with Boeing 727-100s, Boeing 767-200s, and



▼ Transbrasil received PT-TAA in 1983 and it became famous as the first Boeing 767 to operate in Brazil and for featuring wings and other fuselage details painted in shades of blue





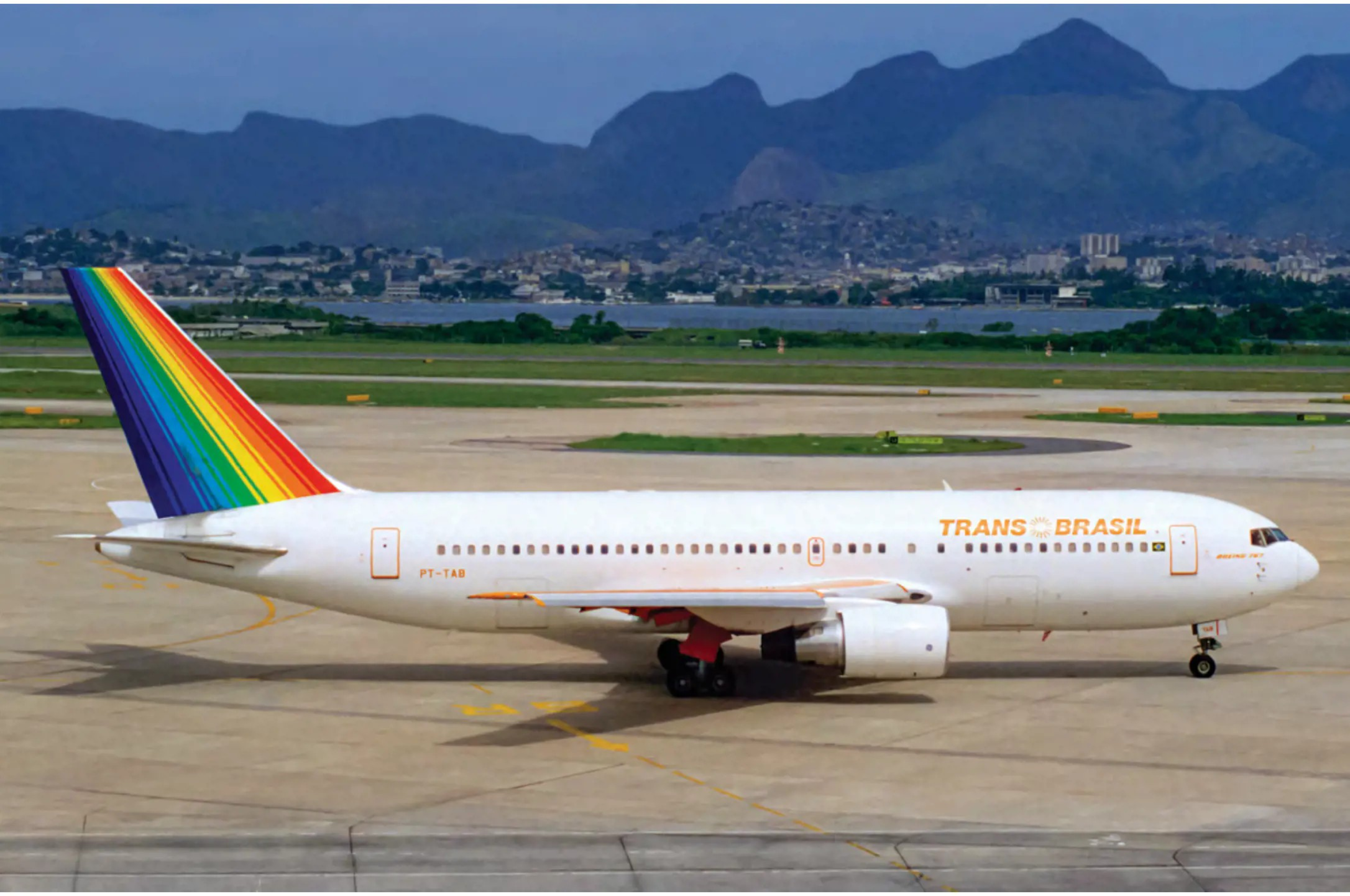
▲ The Boeing 767-300s also received Transbrasil's final colour scheme before the airline ceased operations in December 2001

Boeing 707s.

By the late 1980s, Brazil was going through a severe economic crisis. Hyperinflation reached 2,000% per year, and the national currency devalued daily while airlines saw their dollar-denominated debts skyrocket due to exchange rate differences. In 1988, the Brazilian government judged that Transbrasil was being poorly managed and appointed a military administrator to save the company. The Boeing 727s were sold, and in exchange, newer Boeing 737s (models 300 and 400) were leased. Given the challenges of managing a company that earned revenue in local currency but had expenses in US dollars, the government eventually returned control of Transbrasil to Omar Fontana and began supporting him. Back at the helm, Omar decided to expand international routes, acquiring new Boeing 767-200ER and 767-300ER aircraft for long-haul flights. Flights to the United States, which had previously been charter only, became regular routes, and the airline's international presence grew with new destinations in South America and Europe.

With the end of the military regime's influence and the consequent dismantling of protectionist regulations, national airlines were forced to compete directly with the giant North American and European carriers in a free market. The resistance of Brazil's traditional airlines lasted about a decade into the 21st century — and Transbrasil was the first to fall. Omar Fontana passed away in December 2000, shortly before the airline ceased operations due to a lack of credit to fuel its aircraft. The rainbow disappeared from the skies in December 2001, and Transbrasil's bankruptcy was officially declared in 2002.

** Profile of all the colour schemes that were adopted on Transbrasil's Boeing 727-100 aircraft, which were named Colorful Energy by Omar Fontana.



▼ The second of the "three brothers" that arrived straight from the Boeing factory in Seattle to Transbrasil in 1983 was PT-TAB, which had its wings and other fuselage details painted in orange

The last Italian Hueys

Andrea Avian flies with the Italian Army's Bell AB-205 and describes some action the fading type has seen as it heads into its final years of service.

Following a positive experience with the Bell AB-204 helicopter, in 1965 the Italian Army decided to acquire 106 examples of its successor, the AB-205 'Huey'. This was during the Cold War, when the main threat was from Warsaw Pact countries with armoured and mechanised forces that could attack Italy from the east. The use of aircraft and helicopters was mostly limited to air support, with Italian Army Aviation providing observation and collection of information for the benefit of ground units.

Until the entry into service of the A-129 Mangusta attack helicopter, AB-205s armed with M-21 and M-23 guns were the most powerful air-to-ground weapon system available to Italian Army Aviation. The airmobile actions were both defensive and offensive, with the AB-205s rapidly carrying troops to remote locations that couldn't be reached by ground forces, bypassing areas controlled by the enemy. A further important role for the AB-205 was medical evacuation by helicopters carrying stretchers and medical personnel.

A peacekeeper

The Italian AB-205s never officially took part in acts of war, but were often engaged in peace missions in high-risk areas.

In 1982, four Hueys moved to Lebanon as part of the UNIFIL peacekeeping force, following the UN resolution on March 10, 1978, after the invasion of those territories by Israel. The UN troops settled in the south of Lebanon, with the AB-205 squadron based at Naqoura.

In 1989, Italian AB-205s operated in Namibia during the Gulf War. Although hostilities ended in 1991, tension remained high in the region at the expense of civilian populations and the UN launched Operation Provide Comfort, during which food, clothing and medicine was airdropped to Kurdish refugees by Hueys.

A few months later, in October 1991, the European Community Monitor Mission was launched in the former Yugoslavia and the air component was provided by Italy. On January 7, 1992, an AB-205 was shot down by an air-to-air missile launched by a Yugoslav Mig-21 fighter with the loss of Italian crew and one of two French observers who were aboard.

During 1992, six AB-205s, three A-129s and four CH-47s were transferred by ship to Mogadishu for Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. Many missions transporting food and medicine were executed, often under the threat of enemy fire from the ground, with the A-129s providing cover. In turn, the AB-205 armed with M-21 machine guns escorted the CH-47s. Operation Restore Hope would mark the first time the aircrews of the AB-205 utilised night-vision goggles (NVGs).

▲ **The AB-205 has been in service with the Italian Army since 1966 after taking over from the AB-204** All images Andrea Avian

► **Aircrew perform a preflight check before heading out on a training mission**

In 1996, Italian Army Aviation was engaged in the Balkans under the IFOR mission, a multinational force tasked with monitoring the truce reached between Serbia and Croatia. In the following years, the helicopter's employment doctrine was changing, due to political and military developments following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

In April 2000, the AB-205s were back in the Balkans for NATO's Operation Joint Guardian in Macedonia and Kosovo. Thanks to the presence of the A-129, the AB-205s gave up the role of fire support employing the M-21 weapons and were limited to the troop and material transport role.

Modified mission and aircraft

The evolving role of the AB-205 meant crews had closer co-operation with the Mangusta fleet and

Italian Army AB-205

▲ The final AB 205s are operated by the IV Reggimento 'Altair'

▶ The AB-205 is particularly suited to mountain ops in the Italian Alps

▼ A shot from inside the cockpit of the AB-205, which still hosts some analogue avionics

ground troops. To improve self-protection during operations abroad, the Hueys received modifications such as a heat suppressor for the exhaust cone, an ALQ-144 infrared jammer above the engine and an improved particle separator for the air intake, to decrease the effectiveness of surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles infrared guidance systems potentially fired at them.

In 2009, the AB-205s were further modified and equipped with advanced equipment and protective systems to allow for a more secure employment in Afghanistan. This included self-protection systems, missile warning sensors, a threat detector laser, chaff and flares, new radio systems, a doppler global navigation system and a radar altimeter, essential for night ops or being in the presence of sand or dust. In addition, the cockpit floor received aramid fibre panels for ballistic protection. The pilot's seats were replaced by those used in the AB-412s, equipped with armour plating.

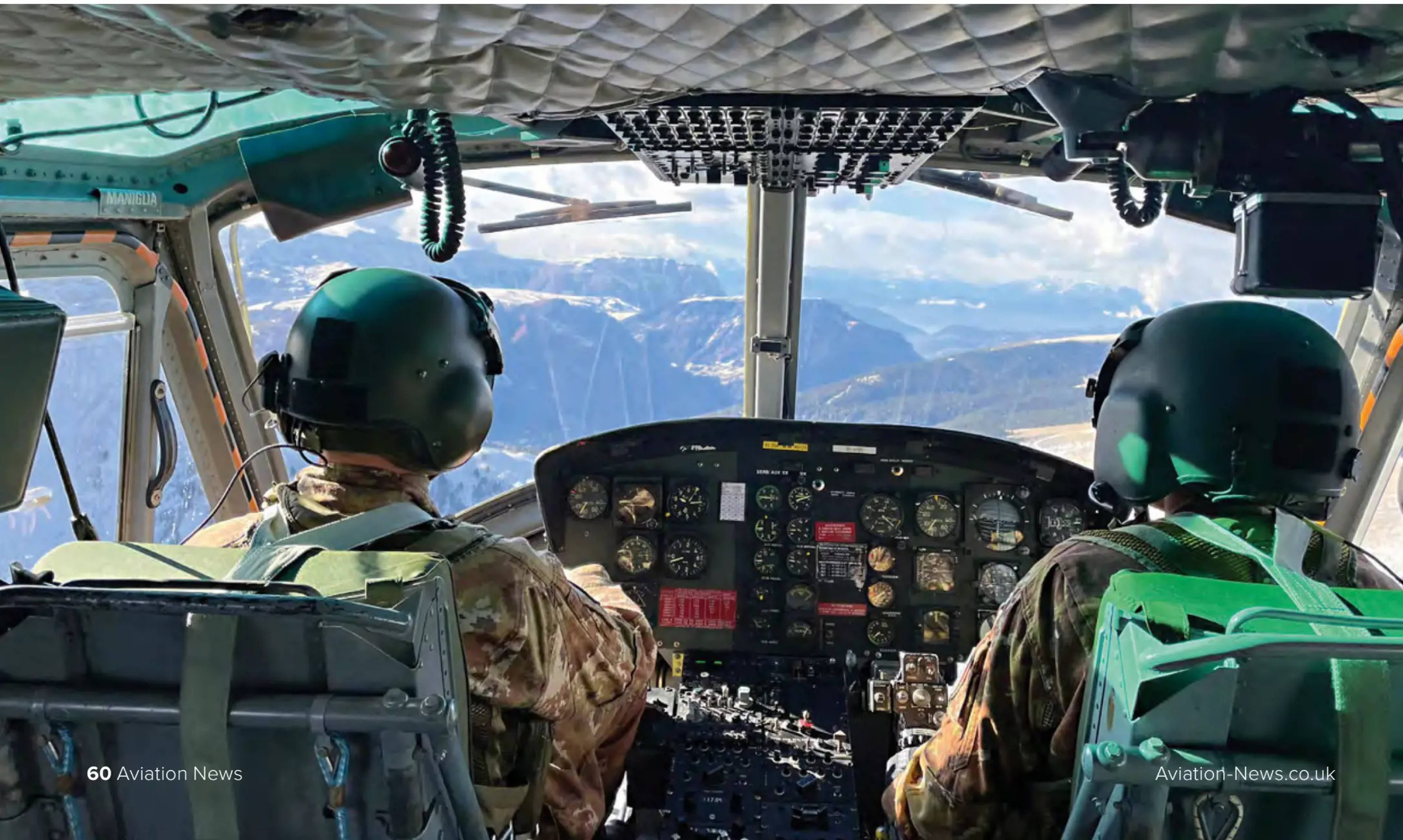
Into retirement

After serving with all Italian Aviation Units, the AB-205s currently only equip IV Reggimento 'Altair' based in Bolzano, with 54 Gruppo 'Cefeo', and with its detachment in Venaria Reale, the 34 Gruppo 'Toro'. The main roles of the regiment are logistics and combat support to ground forces such as the alpine troops. They also provide recognition, medical evacuation and co-operate with civilian authorities in the case of floods, earthquakes or other natural disasters.

A peculiar characteristic of IV Reggimento is to fly low in the valley and close to the Alps, which requires a specific type of training that all pilots undergo when they are assigned to the squadron.

Thanks to its robust structure and low maintenance requirements, the AB-205 is ideal for this purpose, where strong gusts of wind can arrive suddenly.

For IV Reggimento, the Leonardo UH-169D light utility helicopter will eventually replace the AB-205s, AB-212s and AB-412s currently in service, with the aim of having a single type in service, to increase efficiency in operations, maintenance and upgrades. It will also provide the Italian Army with interoperability opportunities to co-operate with other NATO countries. The first UH-169 arrived in April 2025 and all of the 25 on order are due to be delivered by 2027. AN



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CREATING WARRIORS

Ben Stanley Hall and **Jeremy Flack** visited the North American detachments at the RAF's biannual Exercise Cobra Warrior

Twice a year, usually in March and September, the RAF organises and implements its largest exercise, Cobra Warrior, to simulate a large, high-threat, tactical air warfighting operation. The exercise is run by 92 Squadron and the Air and Space Warfare Centre at RAF Waddington. It's a multi-domain exercise focusing on pitting NATO partners against a capable peer adversary within a challenging and complex environment. Initially it was the culmination of the RAF's nine-month Qualified Weapons Instructor course but has since morphed into much more than that.

Over three weeks from September 15 to October 3, participants took part in the full spectrum of modern air missions, including defensive and offensive counter-air (DCA/OCA) and strike operations requiring complex mission planning, co-ordination and real-time execution in a contested airspace. The training aims to develop joint mission planning, as well as fostering a unified NATO standard and developing tactical skills across the participating forces within the framework of composite air operations (COMAO), further developing and refining the participants' tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs).

When asked about the overarching aim of the exercise, RAF Group Captain Ray Morley explained: "Cobra Warrior is one of our combat air collective training events where we practice in the joint space and alongside our allied partners in defeating peer threats within a contested, degraded and operationally limited environment, at a time and place of our choosing."

Most of the exercise is played out over the North Sea in what is called EG D514, although the actual operating airspace encompasses a much larger area. During Cobra Warrior this is mostly off-limits to civilian traffic, which is no mean feat given it is directly in the flightpath from mainland Europe to North America.

Participants

For Cobra Warrior 25-2 (CW 25-2), as well as the usual players from all corners of the RAF and the UK-based USAFE assets, overseas participation was made up of eight

◢ A pair of RAF Eurofighter Typhoon FGR4s taxi in the dark for a Cobra Warrior mission out of RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire
Ben Stanley Hall

▲ Deployed to RAF Coningsby was the Italian contingent of six F-2000s, presumably due to commonality with the RAF Typhoons. This one hails from 36 Stormo, based at Gioia del Colle. Ben Stanley Hall

Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) CF-188 Hornets from 425 Tactical Fighter Squadron and a single CC-130HT air-to-air refuelling aircraft from 435 Transport and Rescue Squadron and eight Luftwaffe EF-2000s from Taktisches Luftwaffengeschwader 74 (TLG 74) based at RAF Waddington. At RAF Coningsby, the Italian Air Force sent six F-2000s, marked up as coming from multiple Gruppos. A pair of B-52Hs from the 307th Bomb Wing based at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, were forward deployed to RAF Fairford. Also included was Draken Europe, who provided both their L-159E Honey Badgers as aggressor aircraft and their Falcon 20 electronic warfare aircraft operating from their home base at Durham Tees Valley Airport.

Unfortunately, several participants had to cancel, including the Italian Air Force's E-550 Conformal Air Early Warning (CAEW) aircraft, as well as the USAF F-16s from both the 31st and 52nd Fighter Wings, based in Italy and Germany respectively.

Exercise set-up

The first two weeks of CW 25-2 were dedicated to daytime operations, with the missions running from 1100hrs and 1300hrs, switching to nighttime ops in the final week, running from 2000hrs to 2200hrs.

While the Italian and German contingents mostly focused on specific CW 25-2 missions, the Canadian detachment maximised its deployment by also flying a non-Cobra Warrior wave in the early afternoon of all three weeks.

A large proportion of the missions involved utilising the UK's low-level flight areas, which they hit first on September 9. When asked about this, Major Sebastien Tremblay-Verreault, deputy commanding officer of Air Task Force Cobra Warrior 25-2, explained: "Low-level flying is essential for tactical ingress and terrain masking. The UK offers excellent training areas for this type of mission profile. Every terrain across the globe is unique, so exposing aircrew to a vast range of terrain profile enhances their overall proficiency in the low-level environment. The unfamiliar terrain demands our crew to exercise more mission planning and pre-flight study, skills that can be applied wherever the CF-188 is called to operate."

Co-located at Waddington was the Luftwaffe's EF-2000s of TLG74 based at Neuberg. They performed low level training while in the UK. Simon Pearson Cougill

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REASSURING CANADIAN RELEVANCE

CW 25-2 was the RCAF's third attendance at Cobra Warrior, which comes under the Operation Reassurance mission within Europe, Ben Stanley Hall flew with the detachment during the exercise

▲ Scar flight of two CF-188 Hornets fly beside the CC-130HT during an AAR mission. The Two hornets which were part of a flight of four took on 3,800lb of fuel from the tanker. Aviation News

Cobra Warrior evolved from the RAFs Qualified Weapons Instructor course and its original intended purpose still stands. Lt Col Renaud of the RCAF explained: "Three mission commander candidates are being assessed during CW25-2. This exercise provides a unique opportunity for them to lead large force employment missions in a multinational setting. Many others will be exposed as team leaders, which will greatly benefit their career progression.

"These three airmen will be fully immersed in the planning and execution of massive multinational, multi-domain missions. As the exercise progresses, the missions and therefore the planning of those missions will increase in difficulty and scope, culminating in the final week, where the most complex missions will be flown at night. The mission commander qualification will have benefits and ramifications far beyond the cockpit. If successful, the three candidates could be called upon to serve as tactical leaders in operations across the globe, integrating with other NATO and friendly nations in other exercises or real-world missions.

"Mission commanders are the future leaders of our fighter force. They will be the ones who integrate Canadian aircraft into multinational operations and ensure our contributions are both effective and decisive. Cobra Warrior provides a unique and challenging environment to develop those skills."

▶ Oiler57 during start up at RAF Waddington with an AAR mission ahead. Aviation News

▲ Scar flight plugged in taking fuel from the 435 Squadron CC-130HT. Aviation news

Fighter force

The RCAF sent eight of its CF-188A Hornets to RAF Waddington for CW25-2. An undisclosed number of them carried Hornet Extension Project 2 (HEP2) upgrades, which will only be implemented on 38 of the service's 80+ fleet, to bring the CF-188 into the 21st Century and keep them relevant and deadly until a replacement can be brought into service. HEP2 builds on the previous HEP1 upgrade, which was implemented on 84 aircraft and mainly focused on addressing evolving civilian air traffic management regulations and meeting allied military interoperability requirements. This includes upgrades to the avionics, which included transponders, satellite radios, navigation systems, mission computers and enhancements to the current Sniper targeting pod.

HEP2 improves the combat capability for the CF-188s, with the heart of the upgrade being the AN/APG-79(V)4 AESA radar, which is a variant of the one in the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet/EA-18G Growler. This allows the aircraft to employ the latest weaponry, including the beyond-visual-range (BVR) radar-guided AIM-120D AMRAAM, the short-range infrared AIM-9X Sidewinder and the medium-range air-to-ground AGM-154 joint stand-off weapon (JSOW).

Maj Sebastien Tremblay-Verreault, the deputy commanding officer of Air Task Force, who has more than 1000 hours in the Hornet, said the CF-188 held up against some of the more modern aircraft it came up against at CW 25-2: "The Hornet, particularly in its HEP-2 modernised configuration, continues to perform impressively in both within-visual-range (WVR) and BVR engagements. Our upgraded Hornets are proving their value as multi-role fighters with enhanced survivability and tactical flexibility. The Hornet's agility and pilot situational awareness remain strong assets. The HEP-2 upgrades including improved radar, weapons and datalink capabilities that allow the Hornet to integrate effectively into a networked battlespace, often playing a frontline role. Its ability to operate as part of a co-ordinated force, leveraging shared targeting data and tactical co-ordination, makes it a formidable contributor to the fight."

Tactical tanking

For the second time, the RCAF sent one of its CC-130HT air refuelling aircraft to CW 25-2. While not as flashy or capable as large fleet strategic tankers such as the RAF's Airbus Voyager or the USAF's KC-135 with regards to speed/range/volume, the Hercules has its benefits over its larger brethren. Being slower and smaller doesn't always have to be a negative. As the Hercules can operate in a much narrower block of airspace than larger tankers, it can be situated closer to the fight, allowing the Hornets to tank and be back in action more quickly.

The Hercules can post some impressive numbers. It can carry up to 81,000lb of fuel, depending on the distance from its operating base. Inside its cargo hold is a huge 23,500lb fuel tank, with the remaining 57,500lb held in six wing tanks. Interestingly, fuel offload speeds differ between the wing tanks and the fuselage tank, with the latter double the former at 2,000lb per minute.

The RCAF CC-130HT would often be the first aircraft in the air for a Cobra Warrior mission, allowing it to pre-position for when it was required by the Hornets, mostly operating within air-to-air refuelling areas (AARAs) 6,7 and 8.

US BOMBER PRESENCE

The arrival of a pair of B-52H Stratofortress bombers into the UK on September 12 was an unusual and interesting deployment. Jeremy flack visited the detachment at RAF Fairford

▲ Air and groundcrew in front of the mighty B-52H on RAF Fairford's ramp during Ex CW 25-2 Jeremy Flack

The B-52s from Barksdale AFB in Louisiana were from the 307th Bomb Wing and were deployed to participate in Exercise Cobra Warrior 25-2. The involvement of this Wing was somewhat unusual to start with. This was only the second time that they have deployed to Fairford to participate in these regular exercises – the previous being 2019. It is also unusual that the 307th is not part of the Bomber Task Force (BTF).

BTF missions commenced in 2018, replacing the previous Continuous Bomber Presence (CBP) which had been in place since 2004. The purpose of the BTF is to operate a dynamic force that regularly demonstrates the ability of the USAF to fly missions throughout the world.

These can be in the form of deployments – the very first BTF mission was for four B-52s from the 23rd Expeditionary Bomb Squadron (EBS) based at Minot AFB to Fairford in January 2018 – or take the form of one or more aircraft taking off from its home base in the US to fly to Europe, the Middle or Far East, supported by tanker aircraft. The bomber integrates with the appropriate allied nation(s) and returns back to the US. It might be that the aircraft briefly lands to rest or change crew. However, the purpose is to clearly demonstrate that the USAF bomber force's flexible response capability and that it's trained to conduct missions anywhere that are deemed necessary. Each mission provides mutual co-operation with partner nations as well as providing valuable training for the USAF bomber crews.

The 307th BW is an Air Force Reserve (AFRes) Wing and is unique being the only one equipped with bombers. It is also unique within the USAF in that it is the only wing to operate two bomber types: the B-52H Stratofortress, of which it has 20,and the B-1B Lancer with 345th BS whose aircraft are based at Dyess AFB but headquartered at Barksdale AFB.

The B-52s at Fairford had different unit markings. While both were being operated by 307th BW, 307th OG, the crews came from 93rd BS, 343 BS, 307th OSS, 340th WPS and 49th TES. They are all either part of 307th BS and 307th OSS or are mission partners, with 61-0029 sporting the tail code 'BD' and painted in the markings of 93rd BS with nose art 'Destination Unknown', together with a spear painted on the underwing fuel tank, while 61-0014 sported the tail code 'OT' and was painted in the markings of 49th TES, which is part of 53rd Wing and had the nose art 'Death Dealer'.

For the enthusiast, further interesting differences are that the 93rd BS is responsible for the Formal Training Unit for all USAF B-52 crews within the USAF, so would not normally be seen on this side

AFRC
93D BOMB SQ

▲ A member of the 93rd Bomb Squadron runs a preflight walk around the aircraft Jeremy Flack

of the pond. However, this was a service retained exercise, which meant that it was planned and manned by the 307th BW and funded by AFRes, so they brought their own training B-52. The other aircraft was even more unusual in that the 49th Test and Evaluation Squadron (TES) is an active USAF unit also based at Barksdale, although the OT tail code is 53rd Test and Evaluation Squadron (TES). The 53rd Wing is headquartered at Eglin AFB, Florida. Being based at Barksdale, they are maintained by the 307th BW maintenance crew, so they are considered mission partners.

While providing an important element of Cobra Warrior, the 307th BW was using the exercise to conduct multi-national integration training through full spectrum operations specifically focusing the bomber with coalition partners. This enhances the tactical knowledge and skill of the bomber aircrew by executing air operations in support of NATO elements in contested environments. It enables the aircrew to familiarise themselves with the challenges and barriers to effective communication in a multi-national large-force exercise (LFE). By the conclusion of the exercise the combat crews were sharper and the schoolhouse instructors had gained experience which enabled them to be the most effective instructors possible.

The B-52s provided the bombing element within CW 25-2, but could be tasked with being an element within either the red or blue force. Whichever force they were tasked to perform they would provide a realistic target for the opposing force and a challenge for the protecting force.

The 49th TES B-52 was fitted with Link-16. During the exercise it created a little piece of history when it became the first B-52 to integrate its system into the European theatre of command, thus strengthening its lethality and capabilities.

Unlike fighter aircraft, which become out of date quite quickly, the B-52 has been subjected to various upgrades which has enabled it to remain a capable front-line aircraft. The type will continue until 2050. To enable it to remain effective in its role, it is entering a substantial upgrade of which the Link 16 is just part. One major upgrade will be replacing the Pratt & Whitney TF33 turbofan engines with Rolls Royce F130s, which will give increased power but burn less fuel. This and the other upgrades will enable the B-52J to remain part of the USAF's front line force until 2050, potentially meaning it will be a key player in future Cobra Warrior Exercises. AN

▼ A close up of the B-52H from 49th TES which is part of 53rd Wing and had the nose art 'Death Dealer' Jeremy Flack

Death Dealer
1014

Guarding French territory

Gardian 80 is among the four examples still in active service with Flottille 25F and one of two examples operational from their home base as of April 2025 The French Ministry of Armed Forces

The French Navy's Aéronautique Navale maintains Europe's largest maritime patrol fleet, yet only a handful of aircraft operate thousands of miles from metropolitan France to guard its Pacific territories. Among them are five Dassault Falcon 200 Gardian (Falcon 20H) aircraft serving with Flottille 25F, based in Tahiti with a detachment in New Caledonia. For more than four decades, these twin-engine patrol jets have enforced sovereignty, co-ordinated search-and-rescue (SAR) and supported United Nations missions across the world's largest ocean. Now, as they approach retirement in 2025–2026, their story s nearing its end.

France's Pacific territories

In the late 1970s, the French Navy sought to replace its ageing Lockheed P-2 Neptune patrol aircraft stationed in Tahiti and Nouméa. The successor needed to be twin-engined for safety over vast stretches of ocean, as well as being fast, easy to maintain in tropical conditions and equipped with modern maritime sensors.

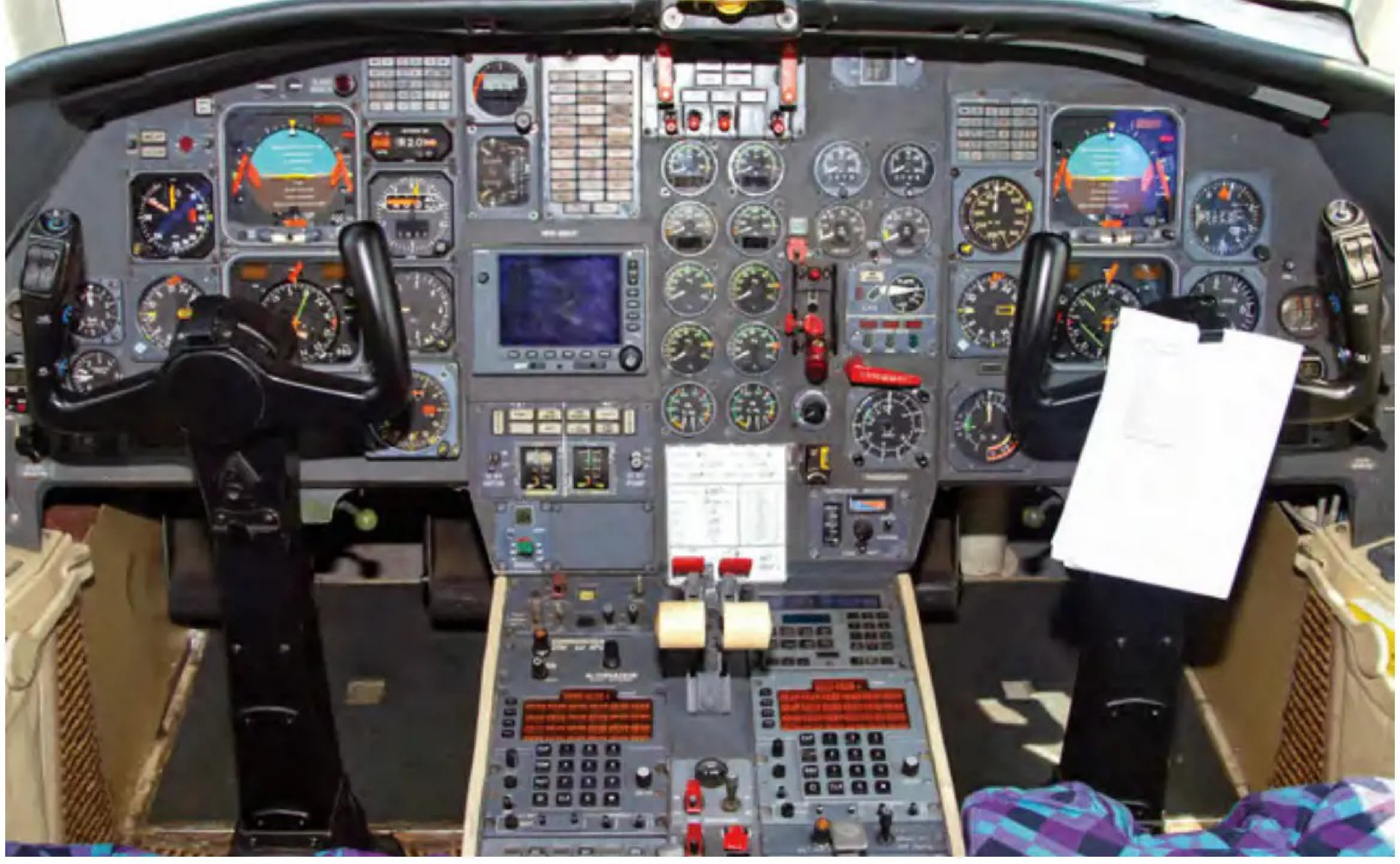
Dassault Aviation adapted its Falcon 20G business jet – already under development for the US Coast Guard as the HU-25 Albatross – into a new maritime variant, the Falcon 200 Gardian. It incorporated a Thomson-CSF Varan maritime radar, Crouzet navigation and computing systems, a ventral hatch for SAR equipment drops and four underwing hardpoints for external stores.

The prototype flew from Mérignac on April 24, 1979, followed by the first production aircraft for the French Navy on April 15, 1981. Deliveries began in 1983, replacing the last Neptunes of Squadrons 9S and 12S. By July 1984, five Gardians – serials 48, 65, 72, 77 and 80 – were fully operational in the Pacific, split between Tahiti-Faaa and Nouméa-Tontouta. Originally operated by 9S and 12S Squadrons, the fleet was consolidated in 2000 under a re-formed Flottille 25F, headquartered at Tahiti with about 70 personnel and a permanent detachment in New Caledonia.

The Falcon 200 quickly proved indispensable for the immense surveillance task of France's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), stretching over 7 million

▲ One of the five Falcon 200 Gardians of the French Navy's 25F making a public appearance at LIMA-2013 at Langhkawi Island in March 2013 Babak Taghvaee

Babak Taghvaee reviews the latest operations of the Aeronavale Falcon 200s for monitoring the naval forces of China and North Korea in the South and East China Seas



▲ Through its four decades of service, the French Navy's Falcon 200s have not seen any major upgrades and still have analogue instruments on their flight decks Babak Taghvaee

square kilometres around Polynesia and New Caledonia. The aircraft perform seven mission types: maritime surveillance, law enforcement, liaison for civilian and military authorities, permanent SAR alert, medical evacuation, protection of people and property and anti-narcotics patrols.

Powered by two General Electric Garrett ATF3-6A-3C turbofan engines and manned by a six-member crew, the Gardian can remain airborne for up to five hours, scanning thousands of nautical miles of open sea with its Varan radar. Through its HF/VHF/UHF communications suite, it co-ordinates directly with frigates, helicopters, and rescue centres, often serving as an airborne command post.

During the final decades of French nuclear testing, the Falcons monitored the restricted waters around the Centre d'Expérimentations du Pacifique (CEP). After the 1990s, their role evolved to encompass environmental protection and participation in multinational maritime surveillance operations.

Monitoring North Korea

In 2018, France joined the UN Security Council Enforcement Coordination Cell (ECC) to monitor illegal ship-to-ship oil transfers that violated sanctions on North Korea. Given France's sovereignty in the Pacific, Flottille 25F's Falcons were ideal for this mission.

The first deployment to Kadena Air Base in Okinawa began in March 2019, when Falcon 200 48 undertook a 14,000km ferry flight via New Caledonia and Australia. The crew performed 20 sorties averaging five hours each, monitoring suspicious vessels and relaying data to the frigate *Vendémiaire* for inspection.

A second rotation followed from October 17 to November 6, 2022, when Falcon 200 80 deployed to USMC Air Station Futenma, Japan, after first supporting the Philippine-Royal Australian Navy exercise LUMBAS 2022. The aircraft logged 45 flight hours across ten ECC missions.

The Gardians' final ECC participation occurred in October-November 2024, again led by Falcon 200 48, marking the type's last operational involvement in enforcing UN sanctions. These deployments underscored France's contribution to Indo-Pacific

◣ Falcon 200s of the French Navy lack an infrared/television turret under their fuselages, forcing crew to fly missions during daytime and use DSLR cameras to photograph ships and vessels during maritime surveillance operations The French Ministry of Armed Forces

◢ A crew from Flottille 25F conducted a search and rescue container drop aboard a Gardian aircraft, between Tahiti and Moorea, in co-operation with the Papeete Naval Base The French Ministry of Armed Forces maritime security, using aircraft designed decades earlier yet still effective in a modern surveillance network.

The Fleet in 2025

By 2025, four Falcon 200s – 65, 72, 77 and 80 – remained operational. Despite their age, they continued to patrol enormous distances from Base Aérienne 190 at Tahiti-Faaa, regularly flying to Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia. Their endurance and reliability remain vital until replacement aircraft can arrive.

Falcon 200 48, the oldest in the fleet, concluded service at the end of 2024 following its final deployment to Japan. Departing Tahiti on October 12, 2024, it routed through Australia, East Timor and the Philippines before arriving in Okinawa on October 16. After a series of missions over the East China Sea, it returned via Darwin and Cairns, landing back in Tahiti on November 12. Its final operational sortie took place on December 30, 2024, ending 41 years of service.

At the start of 2025, Falcon 200 65 became the unit's primary workhorse. It carried out multiple patrols around Tahiti in January, then departed for Fiji and Australia from February 25 to March 2. The aircraft continued long-range missions, deploying to New Caledonia on June 3 and later performing medical evacuation flights to Sydney on July 12–13. In late July and August, it flew to Nausori and Vanua Levu in Fiji, before returning to New Caledonia for extended patrols into early October.

Falcon 200 72 began 2025 deployed in Nouméa, returning to Tahiti on January 22. It executed several maritime surveillance sorties in February, followed by fishery control missions in March and April. After scheduled maintenance from May to August, it successfully completed a post-maintenance flight on September 12 and rejoined operational duties north of Tahiti later that month.

Falcon 200 77 has conducted multiple deployments during 2025, starting with New Caledonia in January, continuing to Sydney and Melbourne in March and returning to the Pacific islands by mid-year. It performed SAR and low-level patrol missions in August and September, before another brief rotation to New Caledonia at the end of the month.

The most active aircraft was Falcon 200 80, which began the year in New Caledonia, before flying a long-range deployment to Western Australia and Indonesia in February, performing a maritime surveillance mission

▼ The French Navy has six Germinal Surveillance frigates for maritime surveillance of French overseas territories, including French Polynesia. They work closely with Falcon 200s of Flottille 25F The French Ministry of Armed Forces

80
MARINE
80

Gardian 80 flying around Faa airport at Tahiti Island in 2018 The French Ministry of Armed Forces

72
72
Gardian
MARINE

▲ One of the five Gardians of Flottille 25F operating near its home base
French Navy

north of Bali on February 22. It returned via Darwin and Cairns by March 6 and continued numerous training and patrol missions from Tahiti throughout the summer. In August, it deployed to Auckland, New Zealand from August 1–7, then to New Caledonia from August 30-September 4 and September 30).

Retirement of the Falcon 200 fleet is scheduled to begin in late 2025 and conclude in 2026. Two aircraft will be preserved in Tahiti and New Caledonia as heritage displays, while three are expected to be sold. Of the 34 Falcon 200s originally produced by Dassault Aviation, only three civilian examples remained airworthy as of early 2025, making the French Navy's survivors some of the last operational examples worldwide.

Given the robust condition of the airframes, the retired aircraft may attract interest from private contractors providing Red Air or aggressor services, replacing the ageing Falcon 20C/D platforms currently used in France and Germany.

The Falcon 50 and beyond

To sustain maritime surveillance in the Pacific, the five Falcon 200s of 25F will be replaced by five Falcon 50 MI/MS SUMAR aircraft drawn from Flottille 24F, based at Lorient in mainland France. Four of these – 7, 30, 36 and 132 – were purpose-built for the Navy, while 5, 27, 34 and 78 are former VIP transport aircraft from Escadron de Transport 0.60 (ET 0.60) at Villacoublay, converted between 2018-2020 to full maritime surveillance standard. The Falcon 50s will progressively deploy to Tahiti and Nouméa from 2025, ensuring uninterrupted coverage of French territorial waters.

Meanwhile, Dassault and the French Direction Générale de l›Armement have begun taking deliveries of the next-generation Falcon 2000MRA (AVSIMAR) multi-role maritime aircraft. The Navy is to receive seven Falcon 2000MRAs between 2025 and 2026 to replace the Falcon 50s of 24F, followed by five more between 2028 and 2030 to supersede 25F's aircraft. By 2030, all Falcon 200s and 50s will have been replaced, giving France a unified fleet of advanced maritime surveillance jets derived from the Falcon 2000 LXS business platform.

For more than 40 years, the Falcon 200 Gardian has patrolled an area spanning one-tenth of the Earth's surface. From monitoring illegal fishing to supporting international sanctions and rescuing vessels in distress, these aircraft have represented France's enduring presence in the Pacific. Though small in number, their strategic value has been immense, linking far-flung territories, projecting French sovereignty and enabling co-operation with allied navies across the Indo-Pacific. As the final aircraft wind down operations through 2026, they close a chapter of dependable service unmatched by any other light maritime patrol jet of their era.

The Gardians' successors will be faster, more capable and equipped with state-of-the-art sensors, yet they owe their mission's foundation to the quiet, persistent watch of the Falcon 200 Gardians of Flottille 25F, France's steadfast eyes over the Pacific.

▼ Falcon 50MS 5 of Flottille 24F will be deployed to Tahiti and assigned to 25F in 2026
Babak Taghvaee

Beja's roaring Tigers

Jorge Ruivo heads to Portugal to witness the amazing gathering of NATO Tiger squadrons

Between September 21 and October 3, 2025, Air Base No 11 in Beja hosted one of the most emblematic military exercises on the international calendar: the NATO Tiger Meet. Known both for its feline symbolism and the sophistication of its missions, the event returned to Portugal for its fifth edition on national soil following previous editions in 1987, 1996, 2002 and 2021.

NTM25 brought together 1,400 military personnel from 12 different nations directly involved in the exercise and saw 85 aircraft take to the skies, including 59 fighters. This high level of participation underscored the scale and complexity of one of NATO's most iconic multinational air exercises.

The recovery of the E-2C Hawkeye from 4F(FN) with apron3 as background

Objectives

The NATO Tiger Meet is considered one of the most comprehensive international air exercises,

MARINE
83
10

Super Lynx Mk88A of 3/MFG 5 (MF) with its beautiful paint job. This year the helicopter component was very important at NTM25

F-16AM from Esq 301 (PoAF), winner of Best Tiger Aircraft, showing off its magnificent livery All images Jorge Ruivo except where noted

not only for the variety of aircraft involved but for the complexity of the training scenarios. Its main goal is to strengthen interoperability among air forces from different NATO countries and partners, promoting the development of common techniques, tactics and procedures. The exercise also allows for the testing of modern doctrines, assessing crisis response capabilities and consolidating the spirit of co-operation that characterises the Tiger community.

Missions

Composite Air Operations (COMAO) missions were at the heart of NTM25 and covered the full spectrum of NATO air operations. Dozens of aircraft from different countries participated, performing distinct but co-ordinated roles in a highly complex environment. These operations included air defence (DCA), air interdiction (AID) and strategic strikes, as well as suppression and destruction of enemy air defences (SEAD/DEAD). COMAO missions also included close air support (CAS), combat search and rescue (CSAR), electronic warfare (EW) and aerial refuelling (AAR), recreating a multidimensional scenario very close to the reality of a modern operations theatre.

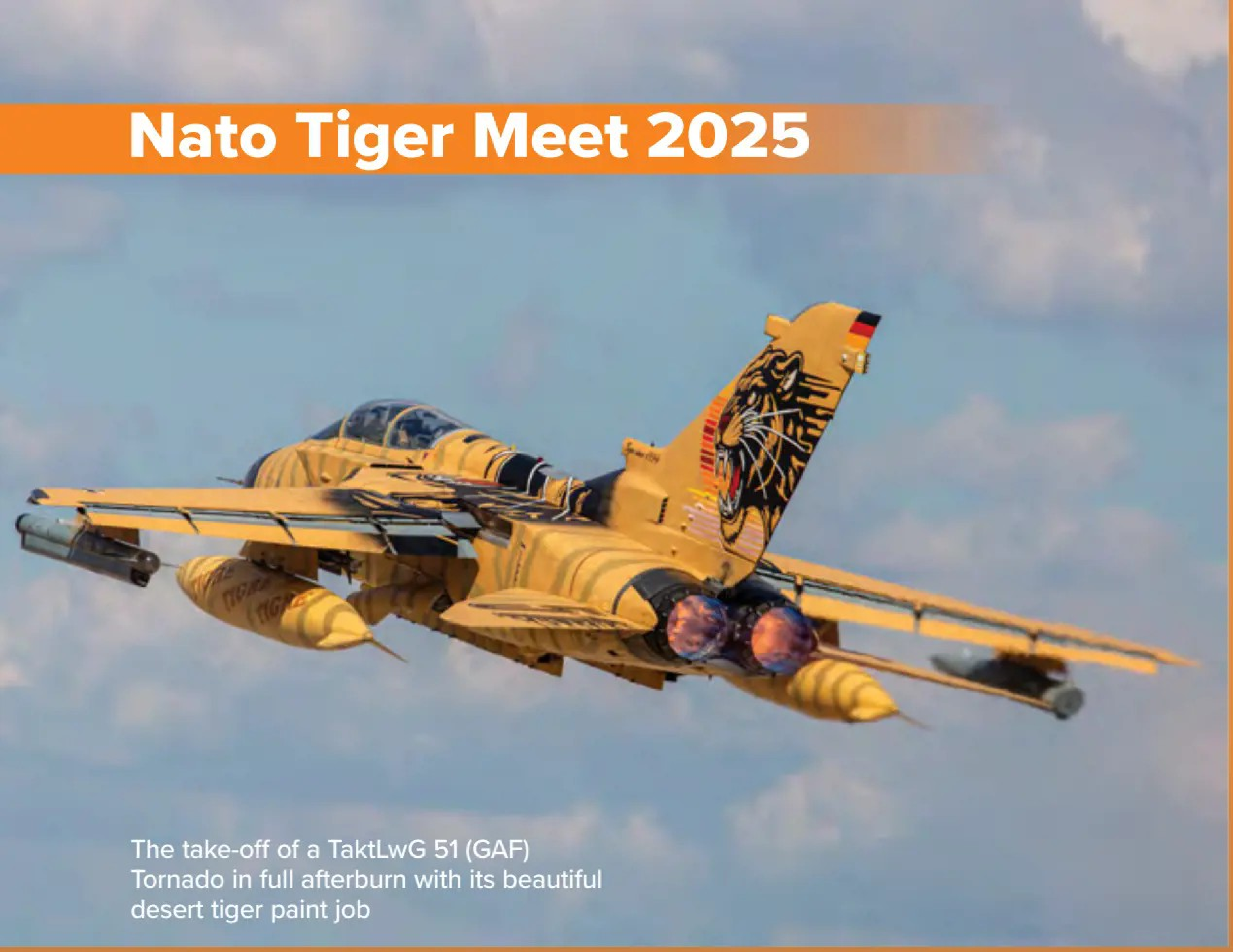
During NTM25, two co-ordinated and integrated exercises took place: Ramstein Guard, part of NATO's

SQUADRON 301 'JAGUARES': A HOST WITH HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The organisation of the NTM25 was carried out by Squadron 301 'Jaguares', based in Monte Real and equipped with F-16AM/BM Fighting Falcons. Its history dates to November 1968 with the formation of Squadron 502 'Jaguares' in Mozambique, which later became the current Squadron 301 in 1978.

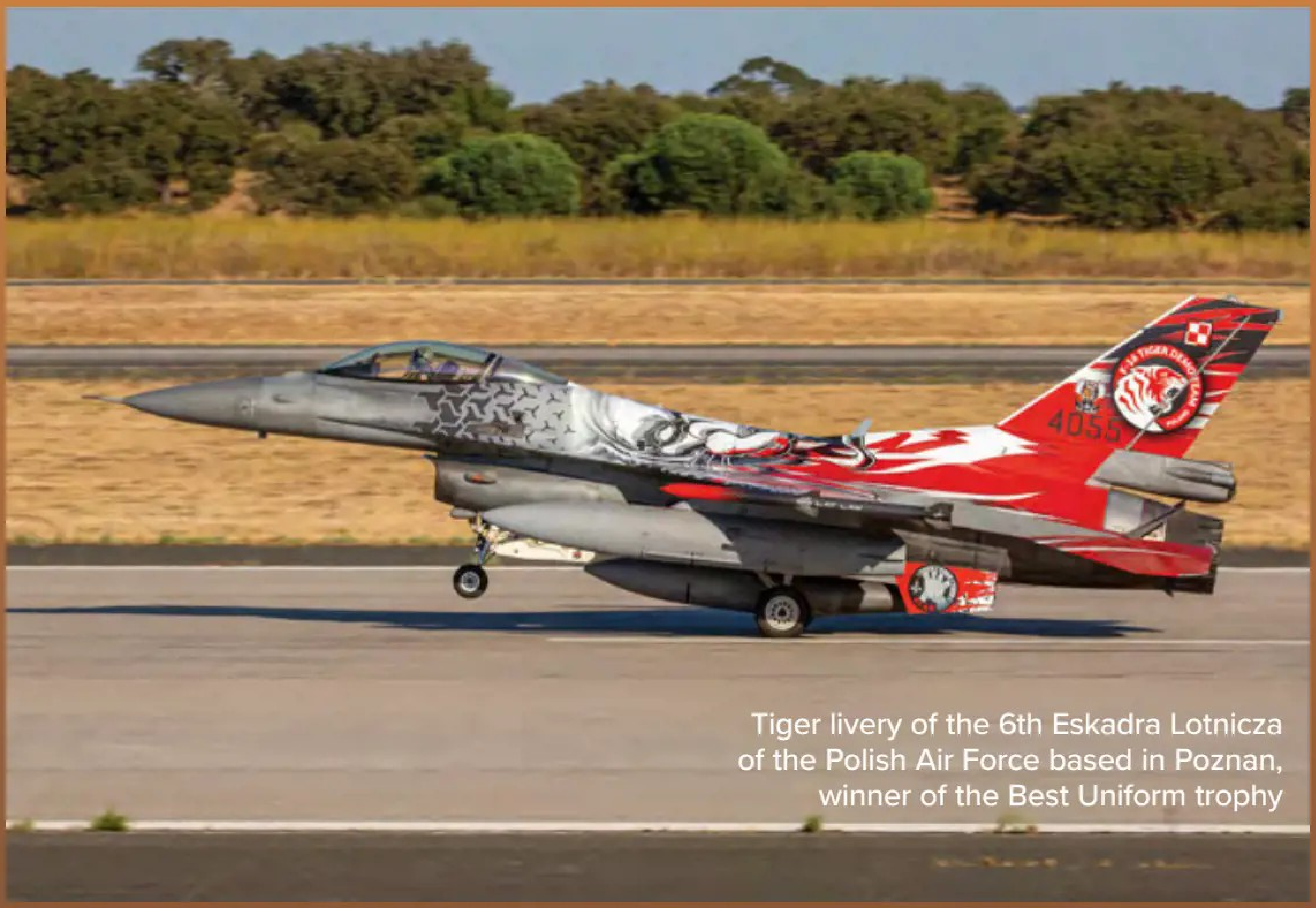
Over the years, Squadron 301 has achieved several distinctions in the Tiger Meet context, winning the coveted Silver Tiger Trophy in 1980, 1985, 2011 and 2019. In 2025, the 'Jaguares' again took on the role of host, reinforcing Portugal's importance within NATO and its legacy of operational excellence.

EF-2000 Eurofighter of 142 Esc (SpAF) starting to roll for a mission with the crew in tiger clothes



The take-off of a TaktLwG 51 (GAF) Tornado in full afterburn with its beautiful desert tiger paint job

Esq 301 (PoAF) with the pilot showing the tiger signal



Tiger livery of the 6th Eskadra Lotnicza of the Polish Air Force based in Poznan, winner of the Best Uniform trophy

electronic warfare training programme, and FAST EAGLE 25, led by the joint planning cell and focused on special operations. To support the simulations, the French company AVdef provided a Dassault Falcon 20 equipped to reproduce electronic threats and interference. GFD contributed with a Learjet equipped with advanced specialised technology. These civilian aircraft simulated aerial targets, creating realistic scenarios for the participating fighters and the E-3A AWACS airborne warning aircraft.

Helicopters played an essential role, actively integrating into both air and ground operations. They participated in CAS, CSAR, insertion and extraction of special forces missions, as well as reconnaissance and medical evacuation. They also conducted EW and aerial logistics support, essential for the success of joint operations. The integration of helicopters into COMAO missions demonstrated NATO's ability to co-ordinate complex, multifaceted operations, reinforcing interoperability between air and ground forces.

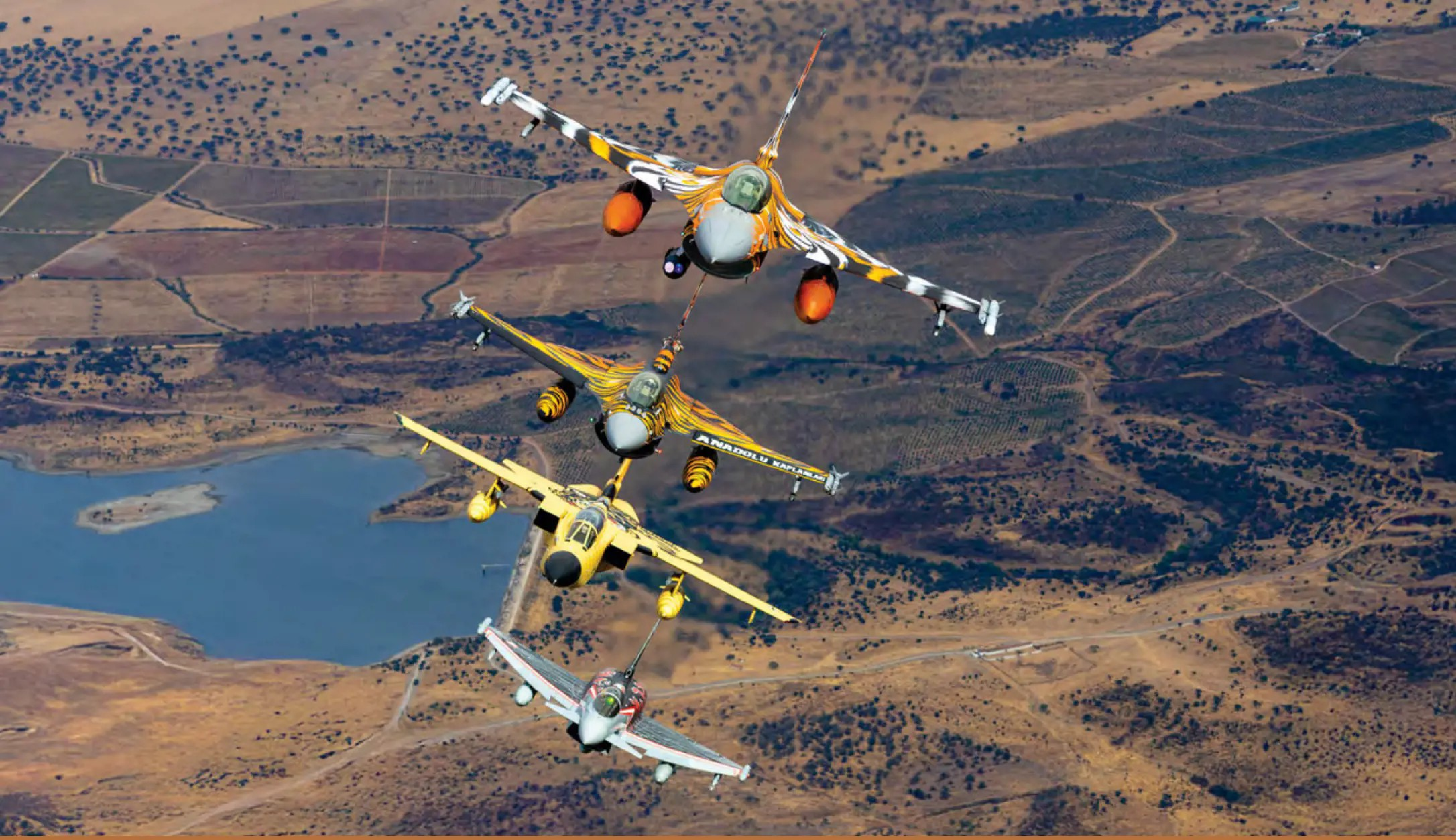
Country	Squadron	Aircraft	Assets
Italy	21° Gruppo	HH-101 Caesar	Participant
Greece	335 Mira	F-16C/D Fighting Falcon	Participant
Portugal	301 Sqn Jaguars	F-16AM/BM Fighting Falcon	Participant
United Kingdom	814 NAS	EH101 Merlin	Participant
Turkey	192 Filo	F-16C/D Fighting Falcon	Participant
Switzerland	Staffel 11	F/A-18C/D Hornet	Participant
Spain	142 Escuadron	EF-2000 Eurofighter	Participant
Czech Republic	211 TL	AS-39 Gripen	Participant
Germany	TaktLwG 51	Tornado IDS/ECR	Participant
NATO	1 AEW&C	E-3A Sentry	Participant
Italy	12° Gruppo	EF-2000 Eurofighter	Participant
Poland	6 ELT	F-16C/D Fighting Falcon	Participant
France	EHRA 3	SA-342 Gazelle, EC-665 Tiger, NH90	Participant
Austria	2. Staffel	EF-2000 Eurofighter	Participant
France	4 F	E-2C Hawkeye	External/Support
Germany	LTG 62	A400M Atlas	External/Support
Germany	GFD	Learjet	External/Support
Germany	3 MFG	Super Lynx Mk88A	External/Support
Portugal	506 Sqn	KC-390 Millennium	External/Support
Portugal	552 Sqn	AW-119 Koala	External/Support
Portugal	601 Sqn	P-3C Orion	External/Support
Portugal	751 Sqn	EH101 Merlin	External/Support
Portugal	Navy Helis Sqn	Super Lynx Mk95	External/Support

The use of satellite imagery also represented an innovative element in mission planning and execution. This high-resolution geospatial data allowed operational planning teams to have an up-to-date and detailed view of the training areas, facilitating terrain assessment, route identification and realistic scenario simulation. The images were crucial for co-ordination among air forces from different countries, ensuring shared information and increasing the effectiveness of joint missions. It demonstrated the growing importance of surveillance and space-based reconnaissance in modern NATO air operations.

Major Figueiredo commented on this integrated planning: "We focused heavily on investing in information security. We created conditions so that all tactical discussions, mission preparations, briefings and debriefings could be conducted in an environment of complete trust among participants, ensuring everyone left the exercise better prepared."

Traditions

One of the most visible Tiger Meet traditions is the special paint schemes applied by each squadron



to at least one of its participating aircraft. These designs, ranging from stripes and tiger faces to more elaborate artistic schemes, reinforced unit identity and esprit de corps, becoming a major attraction for the public and spotters alike. This year, the award for best Tiger aircraft went to Squadron 301.

The coveted Silver Tiger was won by Switzerland's Staffel 11, while the Best Operations award went to Germany's TaktLwG 51. The Best Uniform award was given to Poland's 6 ELT, and the Best Skit, the traditional humorous squadron performance, went to Italy's 12° Gruppo, highlighting the creativity and the good humour that defines the Tiger spirit.

Another equally prominent tradition is the Tiger Games – team-based competitions among squadron members. These activities included physical challenges, quizzes and co-operation tests, playing a crucial role in promoting camaraderie and Tiger spirit, with Austria's 2. Staffel winning the prize this year. AN

▲ Tail flight involving Esq 301 (PoAF), 192 Filo (TuAF), TaktLwG 51 (GAF) and 2.Staffel (AAF) Portuguese AF

◢ Greek F-16C of 335 Mira taking off with the Beja AB control tower as a backdrop

◣ Eurofighter Typhoon from the Squadron 12° Gruppo Caccia of the Italian Air Force, with its tiger livery

A MULTINATIONAL ROAR IN BEJA

The co-ordinator of NTM25, Colonel Joel Pais, said: "The totality of air assets from 12 participating air forces was integrated, flying around 830 missions and more than 1,500 flight hours, thereby reinforcing the spirit of co-operation and interoperability that makes the NTM one of NATO's largest exercises."

NTM25 represented a unique opportunity for the Portuguese Air Force and Squadron 301 'Jaguares' to demonstrate organisation and operational robustness, to strengthen relationships with international partners. The event goes beyond a simple military exercise – it's a symbol of friendship, co-operation and excellence. In Beja, during two intense weeks, the roar of the tigers echoed in the sky, on the ground and in the spirit of all participants.

Next year, NTM26 will be held in Araxos, Greece.

The latest changes on the UK, Irish, Isle of Man and Guernsey registers

New Registrations

Reg	Type	S/N	1st Named Registered Owner
G-BXJI	TRI KIS	PFA 239-12573	D.J. SHIPLEY
G-BXXP	SKY 77-24	124	T. R. WOOD
G-CMZM	CAMERON TR-84	12787	BALLOONING LTD
G-CMZT	DOUGLAS C47A-90-DL	20474	ICARUS FOUNDATION
G-CMZW	ULTRA-UAS	MK2-030	WINDRACERS LTD
G-CNAF	BELL 206B	652	ELIEXPRESS SRLS
G-CNAG	P-MENTOR	1179	AEROS LEASING LTD
G-CNAO	VANS RV-12IS	LAA-363-15339	R. J. DAWSON
G-CNAX	P-MENTOR	1180	AEROS LEASING LTD
G-CNBI	GT-VX2	VX2-009	R.F.G MOYLE
G-CNBU	DIAMOND S-105	DB-SN-024	A. M. HOLLY
G-CNEM	CESSNA 152	152-80249	BRINKLEY AVIATION LTD
G-COSM	SKYRANGER NYNJA	410-29	ROYAL AIR FORCE MICROLIGHT FLYING ASSOCIATION
G-DMCU	ARCUS M	311	I. C. LEES
G-EGPH	GROPPO TRAIL	LAA 372-15114	H. R. ABRAHAM
G-FHJS	HA-420	42000149	ASTRAJET LTD
G-FLXZ	PIPER PA-28-181	2881926	FLEXIFLY AIRCRAFT HIRE LTD
G-HWKI	BELL 47G-5	25003	C. C. BUTT
G-IIOI	EA 300/L	1270	S. G. JONES
G-LMTJ	ATR 72-212 A	1126	LOGANAIR LTD
G-PTRL	ROBINSON R44 II	14903	HELI AIR LTD
G-RPAR	AEROPRAKT A32 VIXXEN	A32362	R. A. J. PARRIS
G-RVAM	VANS RV-9A	PFA 320-13780	A. H. MILLER
G-SAMB	DA 42	42.194	SKYBORNE AVIATION TRAINING LTD
G-SAPC	DA 42	42.AC040	SKYBORNE AVIATION TRAINING LTD
G-SEEU	ROBINSON R44 II	14901	HELI AIR LTD
G-SMRY	SIKORSKY S-76C	760719	STARSPEED LTD
G-SUNV	AIRBUS A321-251NX	12730	JET2.COM LTD
G-SUNW	AIRBUS A321-251NX	12760	JET2.COM LTD
G-SWOW	CIRRUS SR22	10808	WOW AVIATION LLP
G-TNEI	AIRBUS A321-251NX	12706	BRITISH AIRWAYS PLC
G-TNEJ	AIRBUS A321-251NX	12753	BRITISH AIRWAYS PLC
G-TPEE	VANS RV-7	71021	N. A. DURHAM
G-TTSB	AIRBUS A320-251N	12416	BRITISH AIRWAYS PLC
G-TTSH	AIRBUS A320-251N	12735	BRITISH AIRWAYS PLC
G-TURT	ULTRAMAGIC S-90	90/233	C. J. FREEMAN
G-ULPR	SHARK 600 UK	177	F. P. SMIDDY
G-WHTE	SHARK 600 UK	176	THE LIGHT AIRCRAFT COMPANY LTD

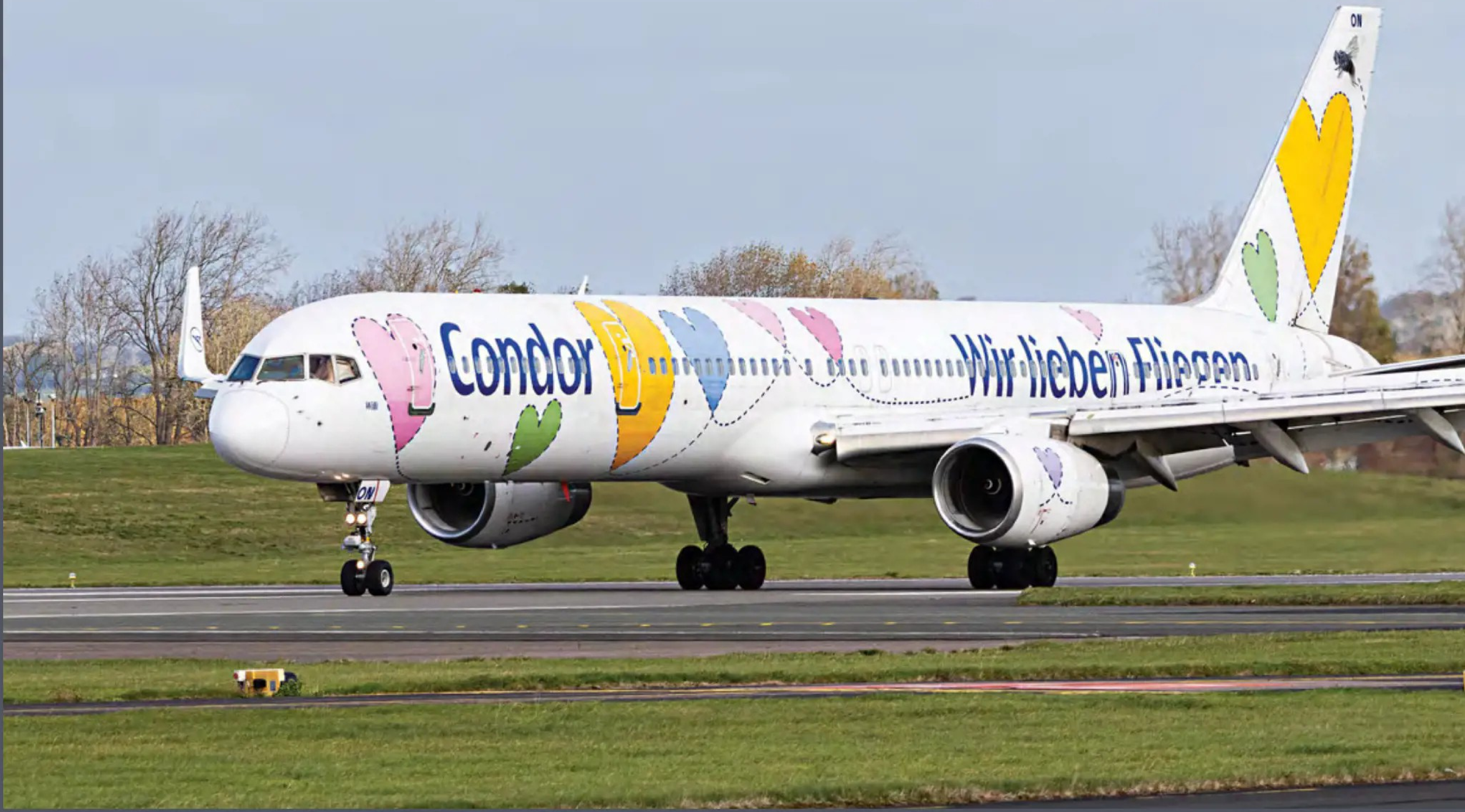
De-Registrations

Mark	Type	Removal Reason	To
G-BFXS	ROCKWELL COMMANDER 114	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-BJAY	PIPER J3C-65	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-BNPY	CESSNA 152	Transferred to UK Registration Mark	G-CNEM
G-BPXA	PIPER PA-28-181	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-BWOI	PIPER PA-28-161	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-BXRS	WESTLAND SCOUT AH1	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-BZXO	CAMERON Z-105	Destroyed	
G-CBWP	EUROPA	Destroyed	
G-CFLK	CAMERON C-90	Transferred to another country or authority	ITALY
G-CIPJ	DH83 FOX MOTH	Transferred to another country or authority	NEW ZEALAND
G-CIXJ	CURTISS P-36C	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-CKIS	PULSAR XP	Cancelled by CAA	
G-CKYP	AW139	Transferred to another country or authority	BRAZIL
G-CLGE	TRI R-KIS	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-CMHT	GROB G109B	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-CMZV	AEROPRAKT A32 VIXXEN	Transferred to UK Registration Mark	G-RPAR
G-CNAF	BELL 206B	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-COMS	DA 42	Transferred to UK Registration Mark	G-SAPC
G-DPAI	DA 62	Transferred to another country or authority	GUERNSEY
G-FLYA	MOONEY M20J	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-HWAA	EC135 T2	Transferred to another country or authority	SPAIN
G-ISAR	CESSNA 421C	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-JHMP	SOCATA TB20	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-LEGZ	ROCKWELL COMMANDER 695	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-LLGE	LBL 360A	Transferred to another country or authority	MOROCCO
G-LUFC	BELL 407	Transferred to another country or authority	SOUTH AFRICA
G-MJSY	GOLDWING	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-MTTZ	PEGASUS XL-Q	Cancelled by CAA	
G-MVFB	PEGASUS XL-Q	Cancelled by CAA	
G-MVMI	THRUSTER TST MK1	Cancelled by CAA	
G-NYKS	CESSNA 182T	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-OLAD	EA 300/L	Transferred to UK Registration Mark	G-IIOI
G-OMAS	CESSNA A150M	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-OSIT	PITTS S-1T	Transferred to another country or authority	FRANCE
G-RADR	SKYRAIDER AD4-NA	Cancelled by CAA	
G-RVLC	VANS RV-9A	Transferred to UK Registration Mark	G-RVAM
G-SBLT	STEEN SKYBOLT	Permanently withdrawn from use	
G-TRAT	PILATUS PC-12/47	Transferred to another country or authority	SAN MARINO
G-VALY	SOCATA TB21	Transferred to another country or authority	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
G-ZBLT	CESSNA 182S	Cancelled by CAA	

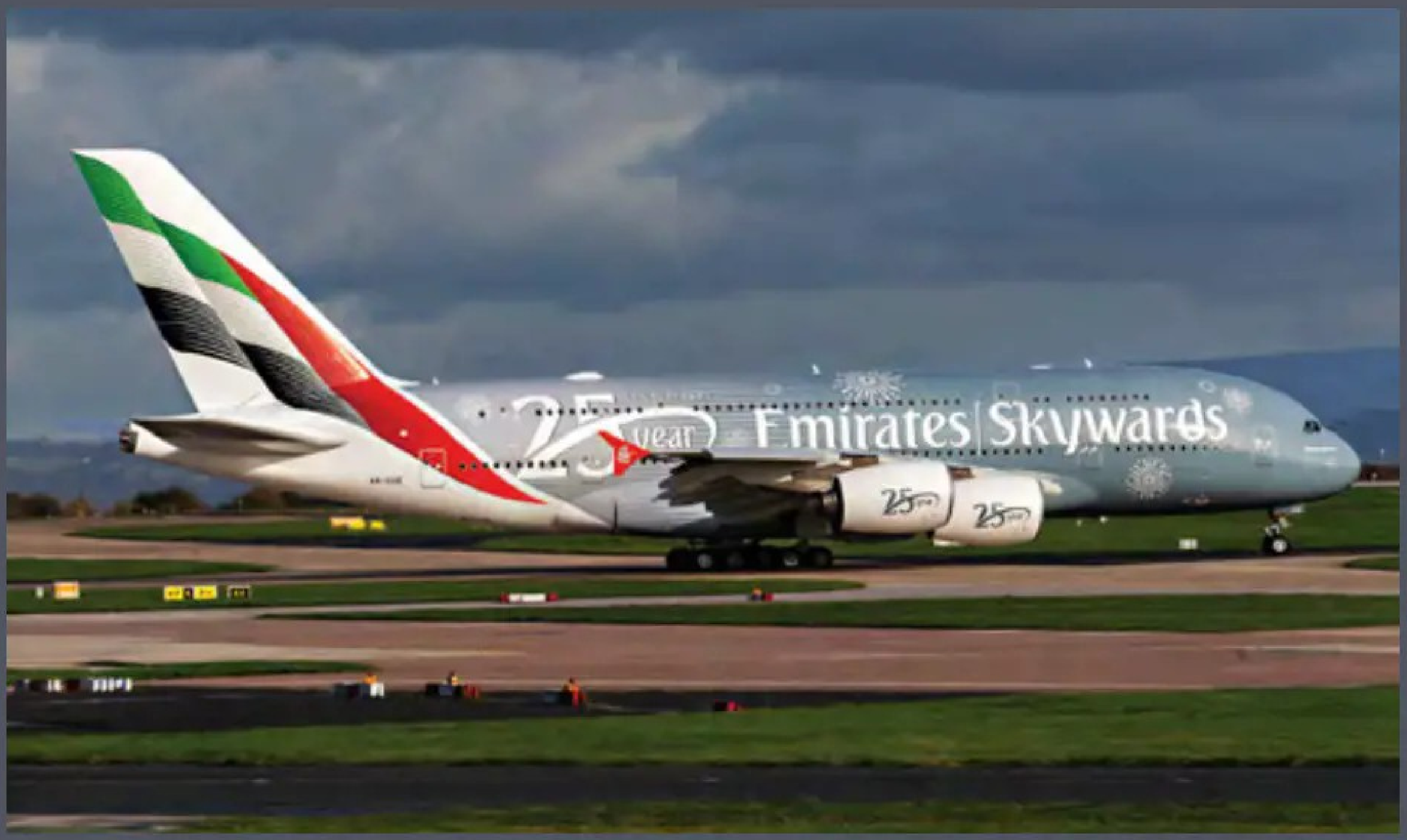
CIVILIAN MOVEMENTS

Ben Stanley Hall showcases the array of interesting aircraft movements up and down the UK

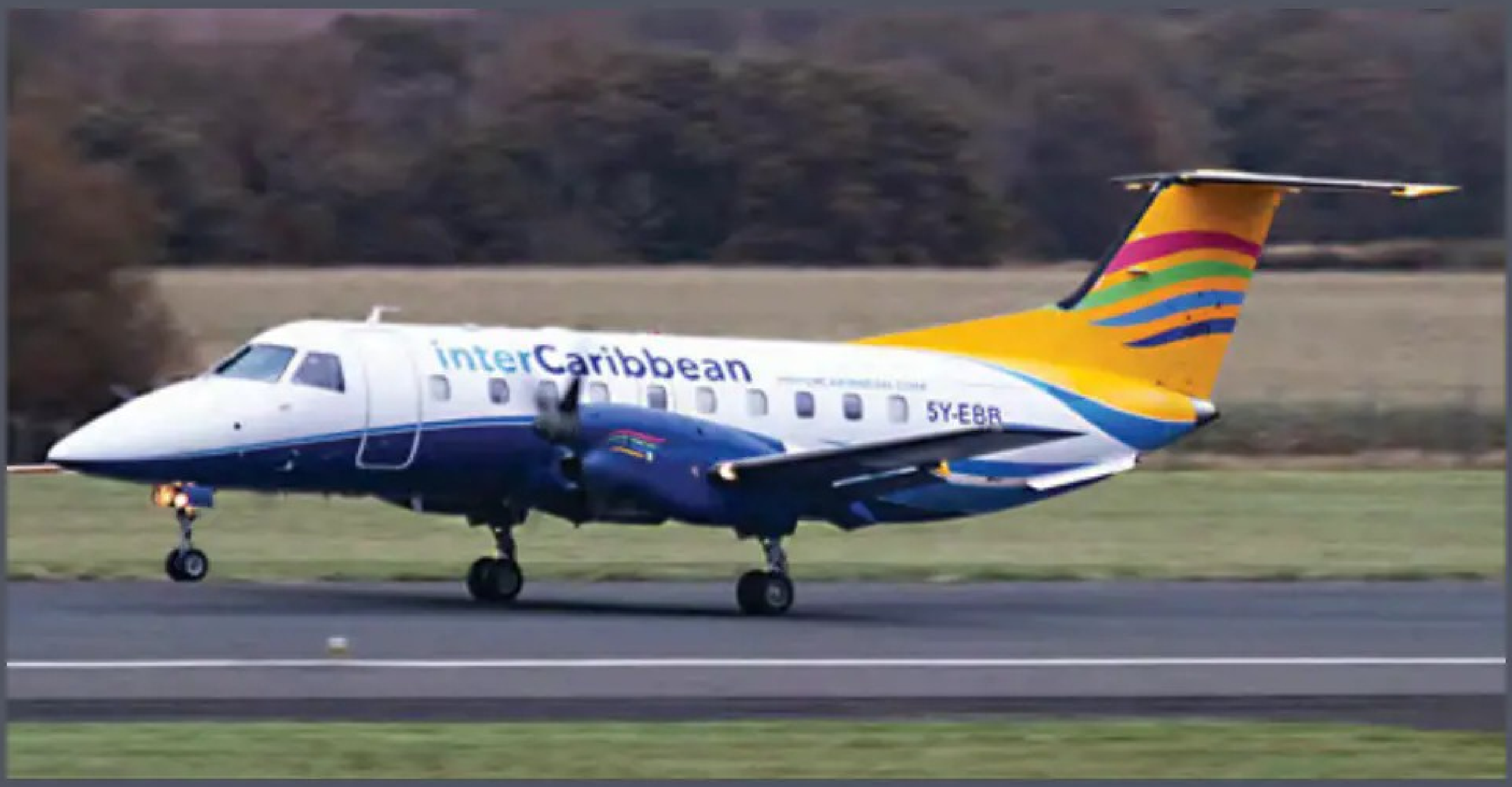
We welcome contributions from readers across the world. If you photograph an aircraft that is not in its usual location or could be of interest, please email your images, without watermarks, to ben.hall@keypublishing.com using the subject heading 'Just Passing Through', with a short caption including as much information as possible. AN



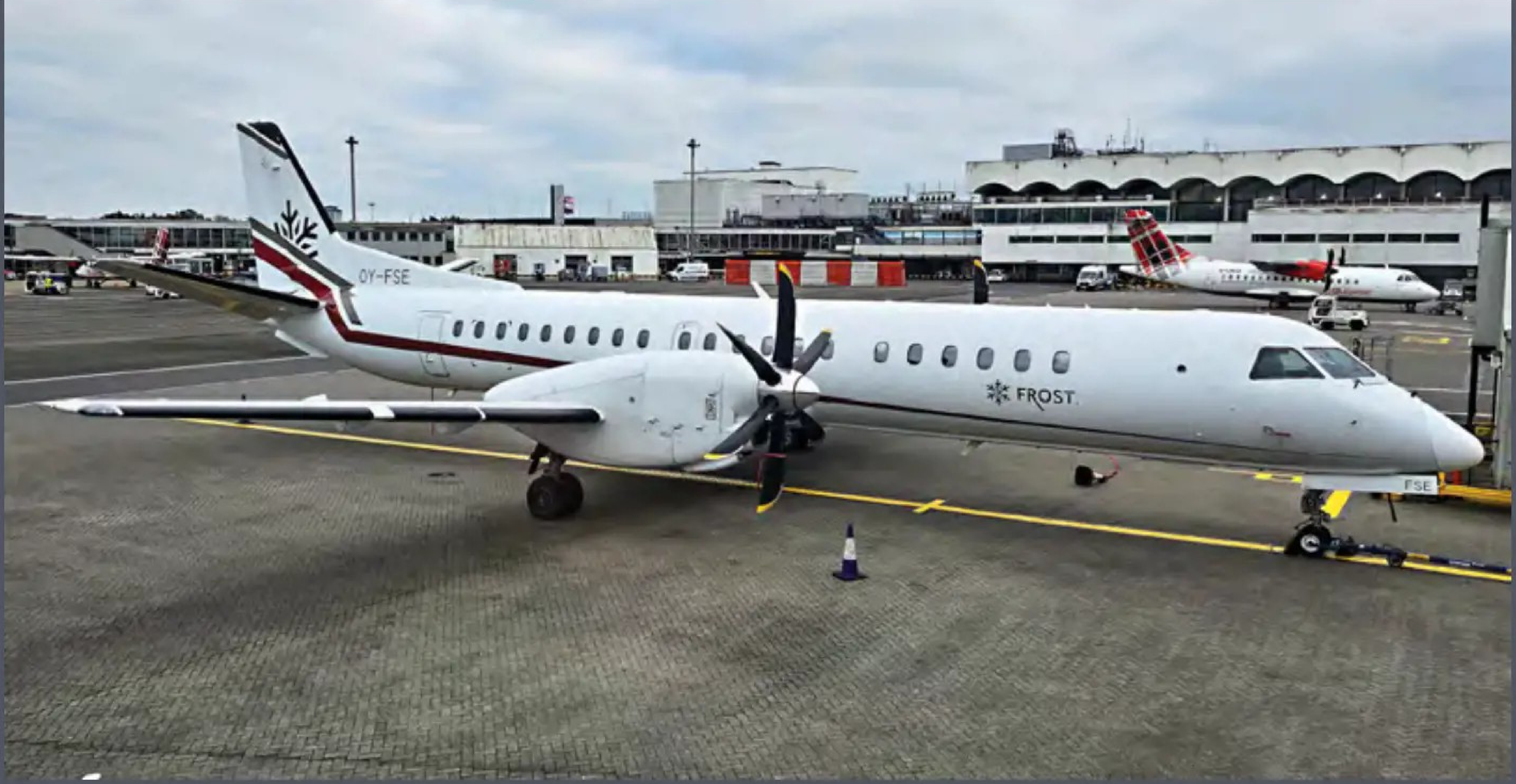
▲ ON OCTOBER 27, after 25 years of service, Condor's Boeing 757 D-ABON took its final flight from Düsseldorf to St Athan, where the aircraft will eventually be scrapped. A standout aircraft in the Condor fleet, well known for its unique Wir Lieben Fliegen livery painted in March 2006, the aircraft added a splash of colour to the skies. A 1hr-22minute flight from Düsseldorf, the aircraft can be seen arriving at St Athan via runway 25 with callsign 'CONDOR4787'. Kieran Marshall



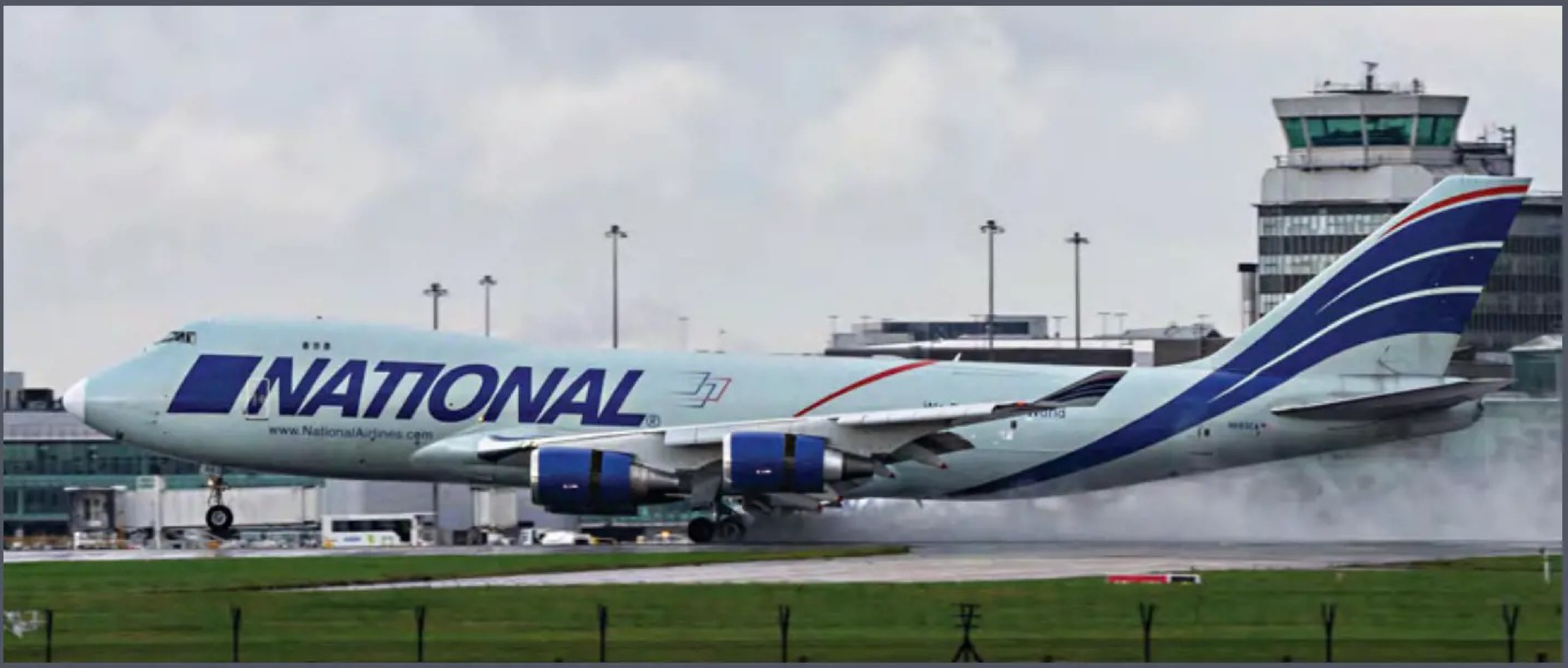
▲ A6-EUE, an Emirates A380 displaying the latest Skywards 25 years special livery on flight EK17 from Manchester Airport on October 29. Martyn Cartledge



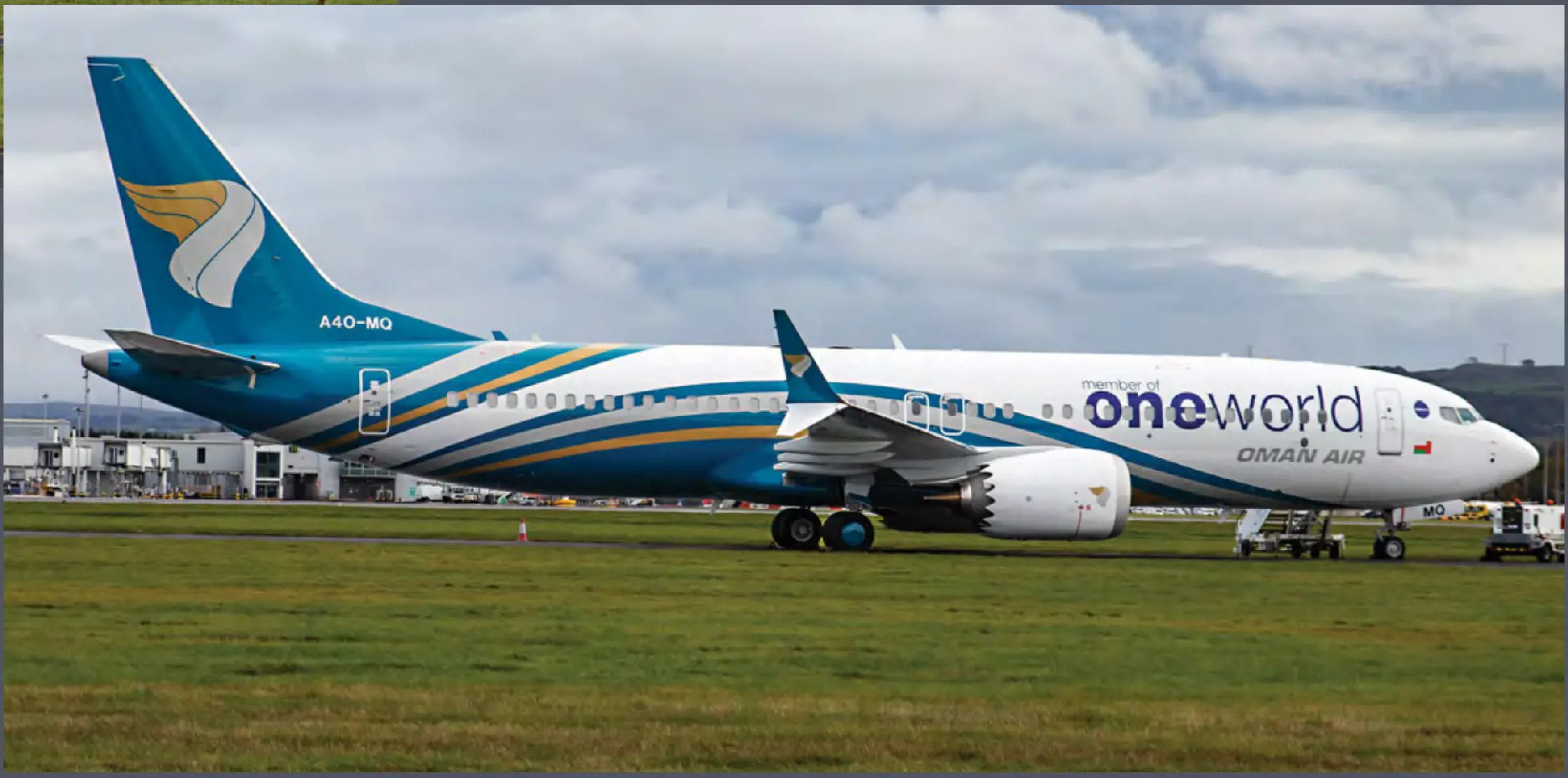
▲ Passing through Prestwick on October 05 was this former InterCaribbean Airways Embraer 120ER 'Brasilia'. The aircraft carried a new registration, 5Y-EBB (c/n 120268) and was on delivery to a new operator in Kenya. After arriving from Keflavik, the aircraft departed to Palermo in Italy after taking on some fuel. Stuart Haigh



▲ This 'Frost' Saab 2000, OY-FSE (c/n 2000-043) is pictured at Glasgow Airport. The aircraft was operating a charter flight from/to Malmo in Sweden on October 15. B-1 images



▲ The Queen of the Skies was once a familiar fixture at Manchester. So, the arrival of National Airlines Boeing 747-4HAFER, N663CA (c/n 35237) on October 22 was a welcome sight. Here it is landing from Dallas/Fort Worth before positioning out empty later that day to Mumbai. Ross Harwood

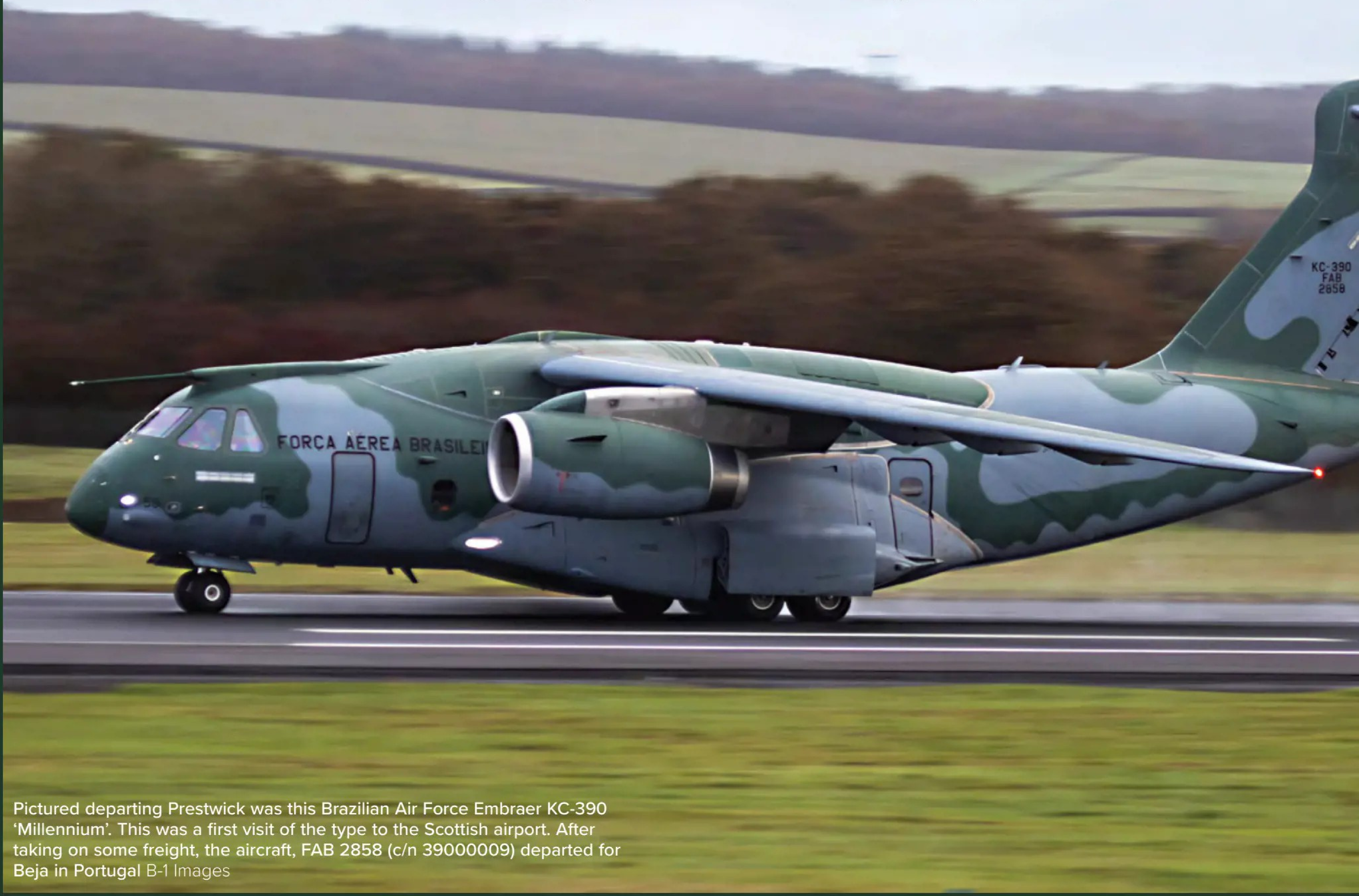


▲ Oman's latest Boeing 737-MAX 8, A4O-MQ (c/n 63371) was delivered through Glasgow on October 21. This example wears 'Oneworld' billboard titles. The aircraft arrived from Boeing Field in Seattle, before departing to Muscat in Oman the following day. B-1 Images

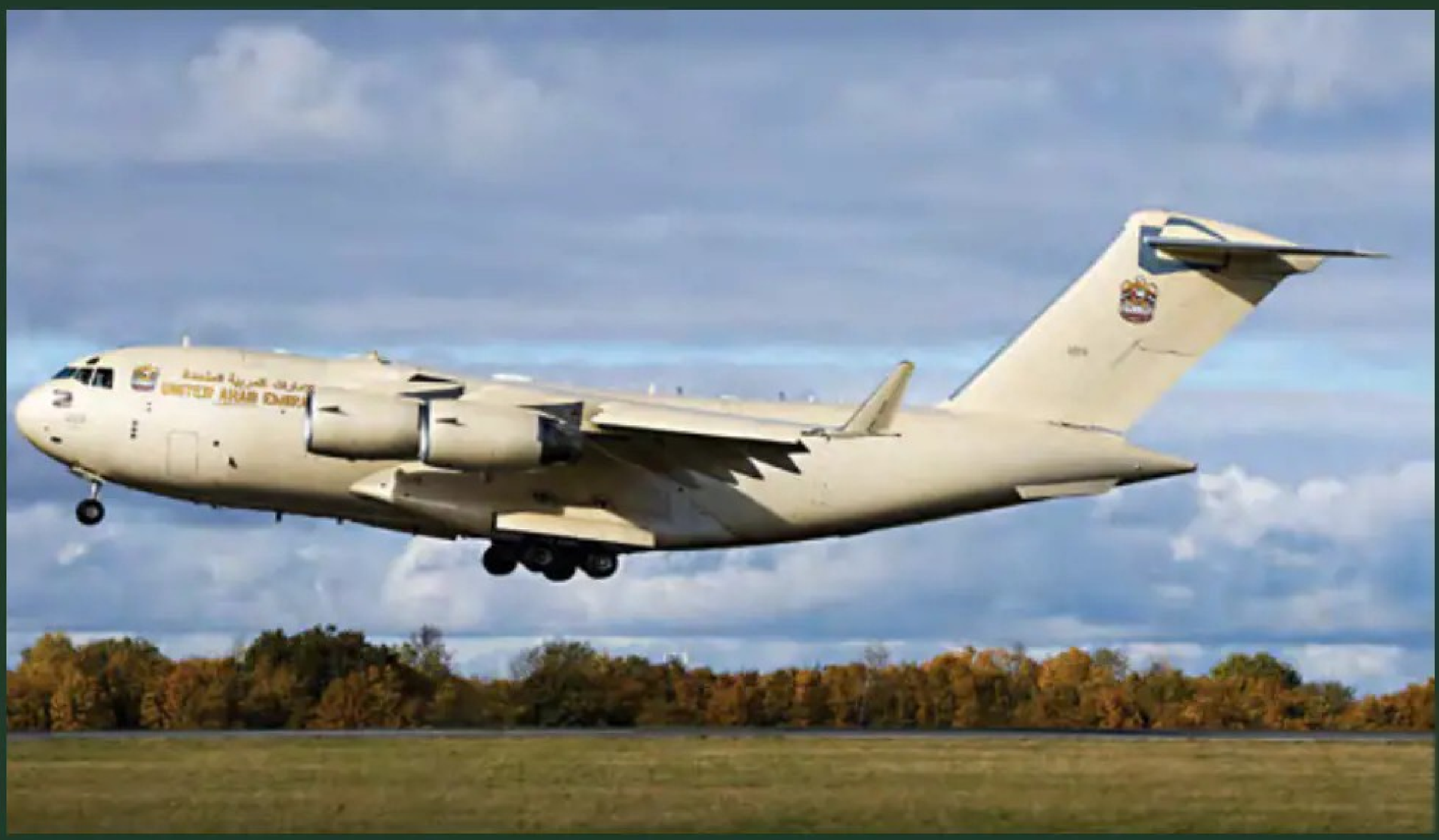
MILITARY MOVEMENTS

Ben Stanley Hall showcases the rich diversity of military aircraft movements up and down the UK

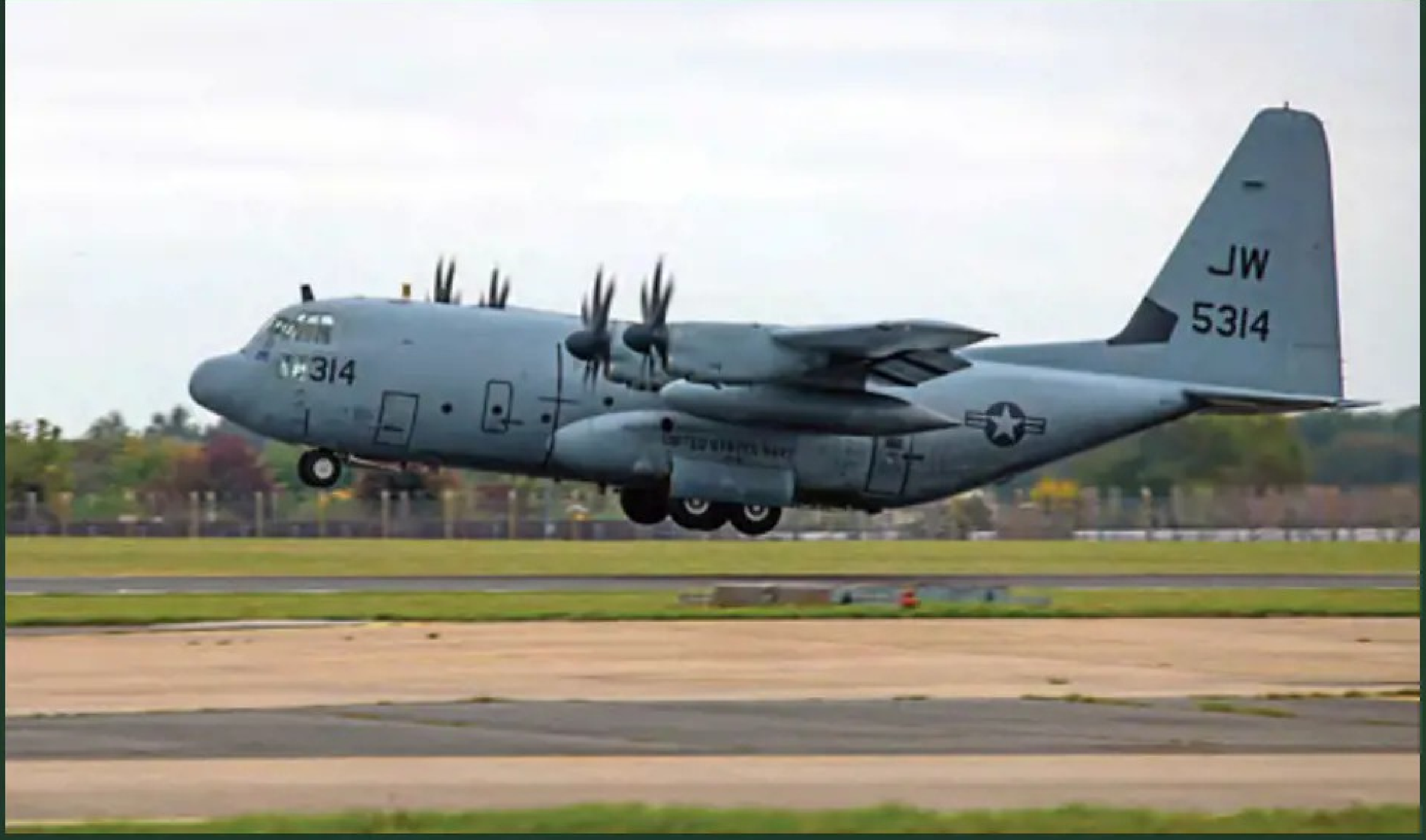
We welcome contributions covering any military movements throughout the UK. If you photograph an aircraft in an unusual location or away from its home base it could be of interest. Please email your images without watermarks to ben.hall@keypublishing.com with a descriptive caption including where and when the image was taken, using the subject heading 'Just Passing Through'.



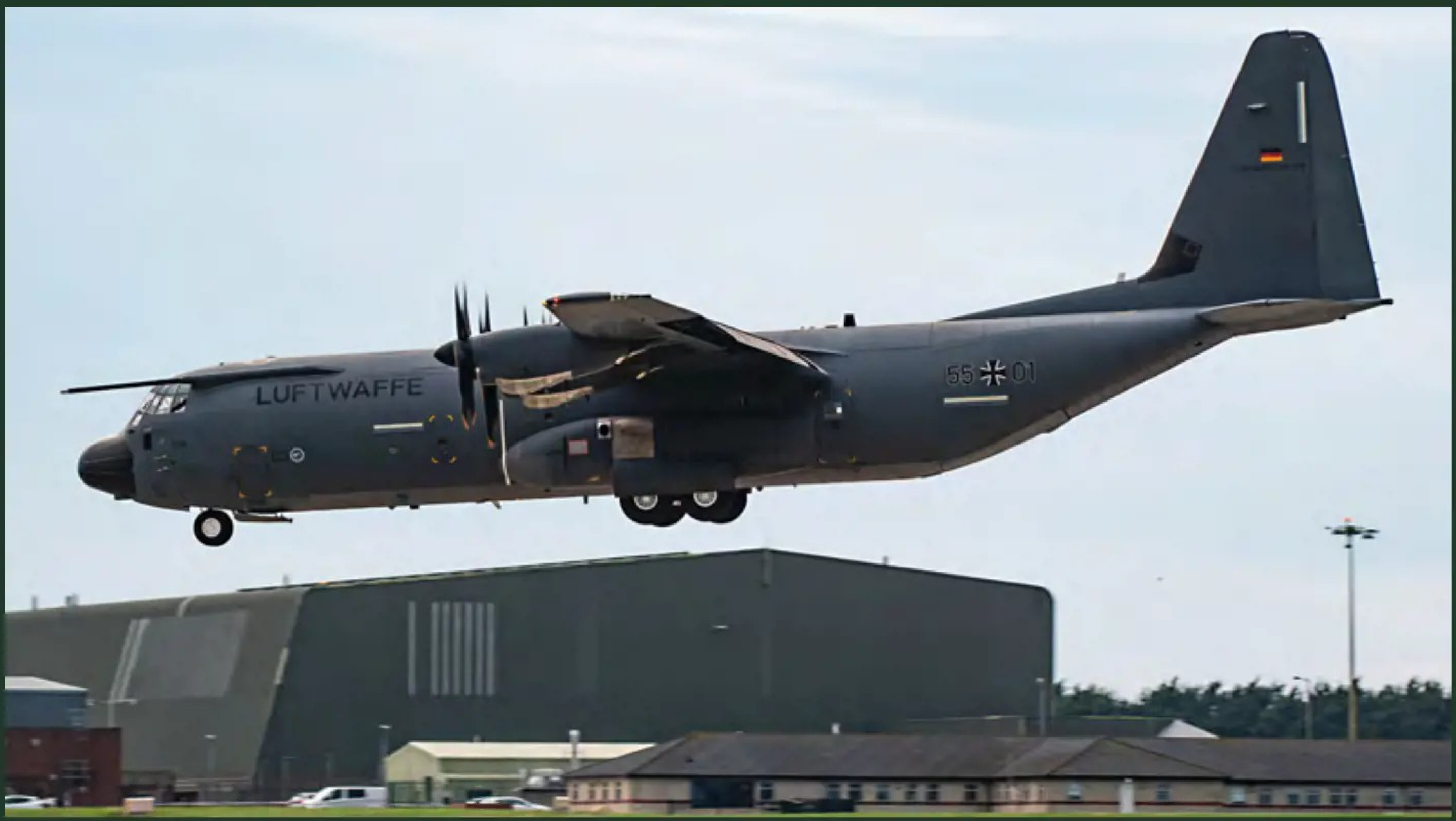
Pictured departing Prestwick was this Brazilian Air Force Embraer KC-390 'Millennium'. This was a first visit of the type to the Scottish airport. After taking on some freight, the aircraft, FAB 2858 (c/n 39000009) departed for Beja in Portugal B-1 Images



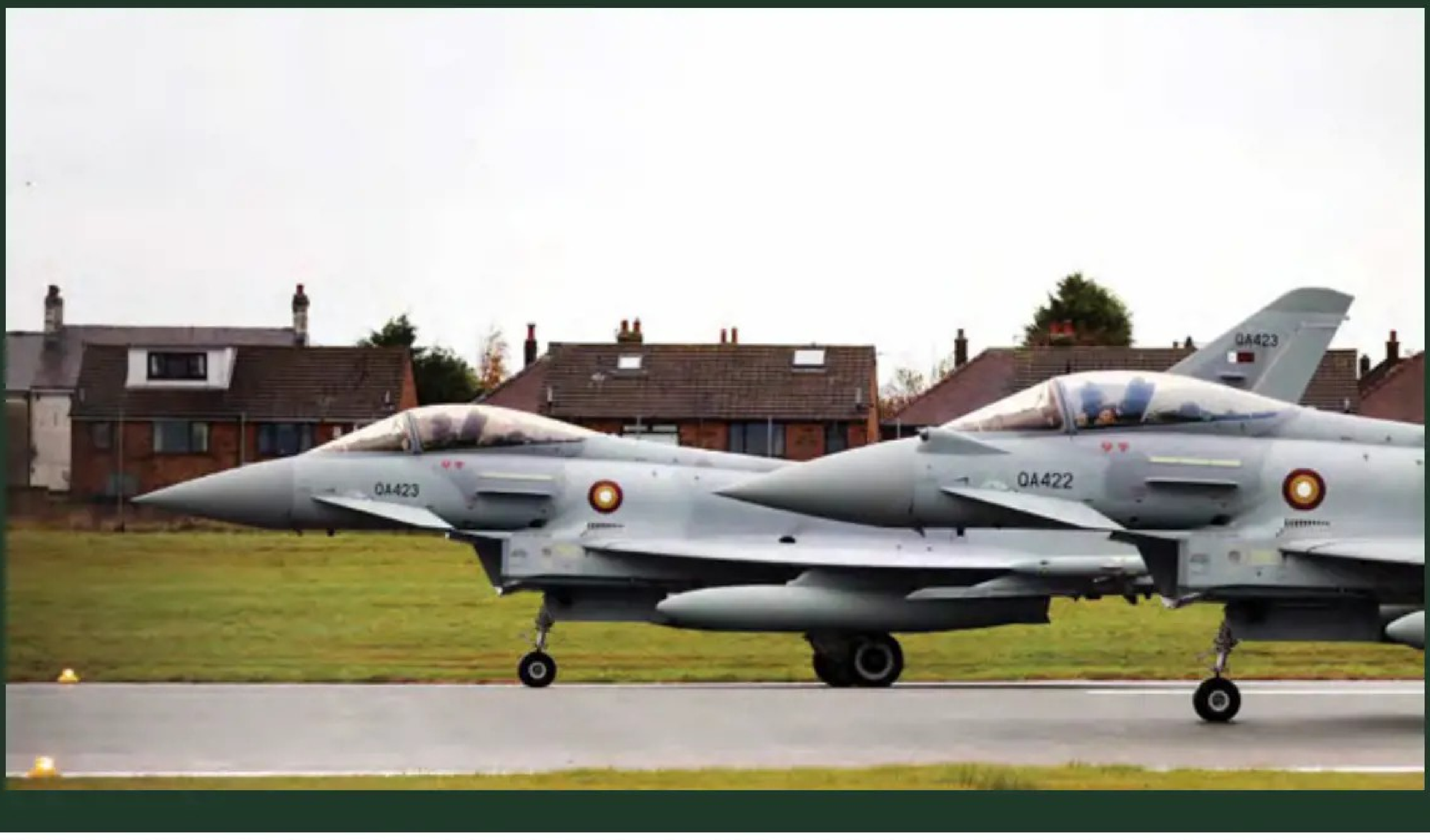
▲ This Boeing C-17A Globemaster III 1228 of the United Arab Emirates Air Force is pictured arriving into London Stansted as 'UAF1226' on October 21, to collect a pair of Augusta Westland AW139 helicopters of the Dubai Air Wing Ethan Jellyman



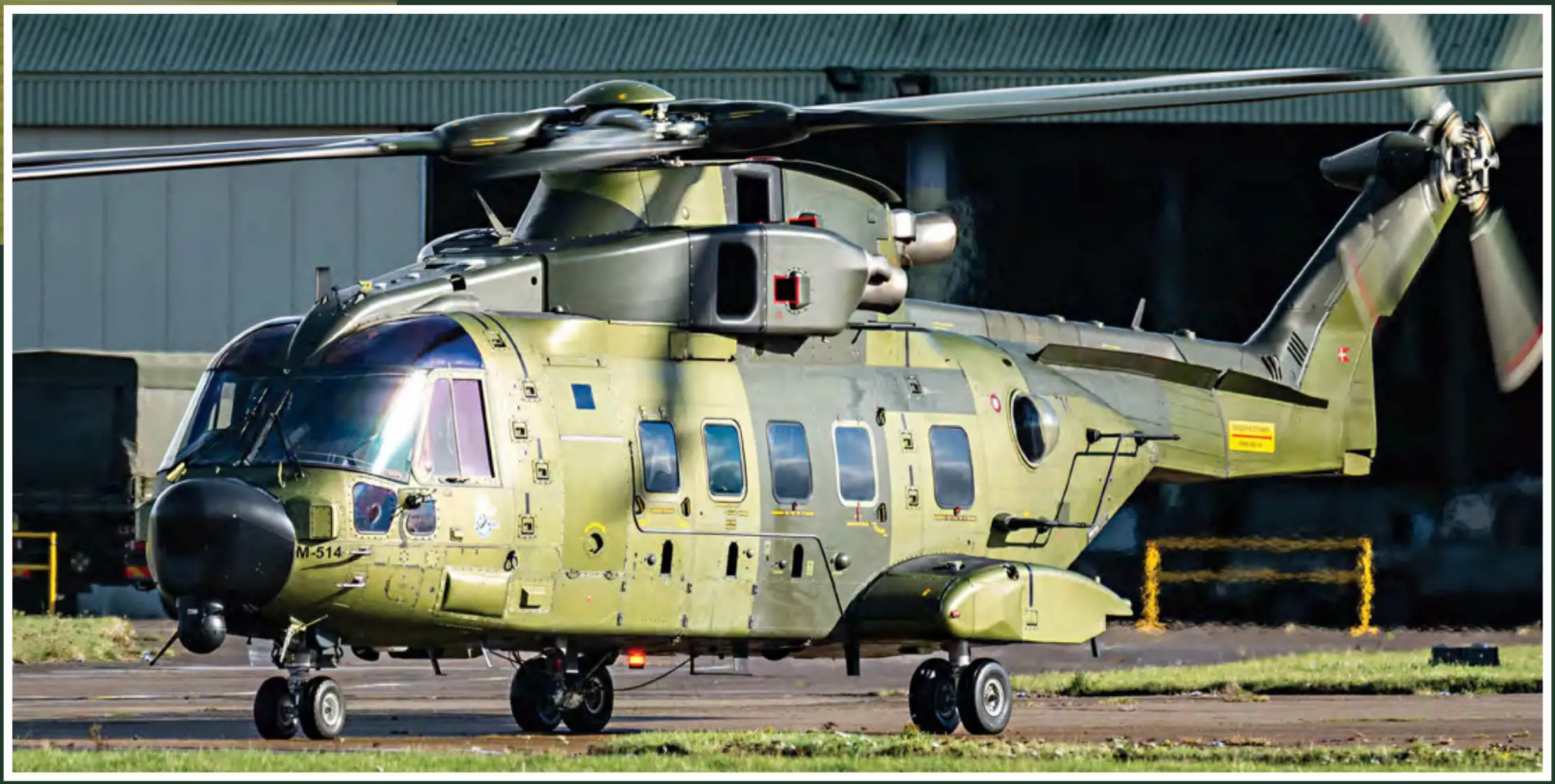
▲ Arriving at RAF Mildenhall on a 'gas 'n' go' on October 9 was Lockheed C-130T, 165314/'JW' of VR-62. The aircraft flew in from Shannon requiring liquid oxygen as none of the civilian airfields hold bottled liquid oxygen Peter R Foster



▲ Luftwaffe C-130J-30 arriving at RAF Waddington, on the evening of October 2 in support of TLG74's EF-2000 deployment of Cobra Warrior 25-2. It arrived as German Air Force (GAF) 309 Michael Hiley



◀ At 0815 on November 3, the final two Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to be manufactured in the UK took off from the BAe Systems Warton facility on their outward flight to Qatar becoming the last of 24 aircraft ordered by the Qatari Air Force in 2017, some eight years ago Phil Adkin



▲ A Royal Danish Air Force EH101 Merlin Mk.512, M-514, taxis to runway 23 at Wattisham Airfield after a brief fuel stop on its way to Yeovil from De Kooy, Netherlands Alex Wood

Next Month

Filip Modrzejewski

Andreas Rohde

The Trident

The final day of 1985 marked the end of more than 30 years in the UK of one of the most innovative aircraft. We investigate the career of the Hawker Siddeley Trident airliner

Polish Air force VIP

We look into the mission and fly with the aircraft of the Polish Air force VIP fleet

Seaplane Adventures

We take to the skies aboard the de Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beavers operated by Seaplane Adventures out of Sausalito, California

Singapore Airlines

We enjoy the history and current operations of one of the most premium and well-respected flag carriers in the world, Singapore Airlines

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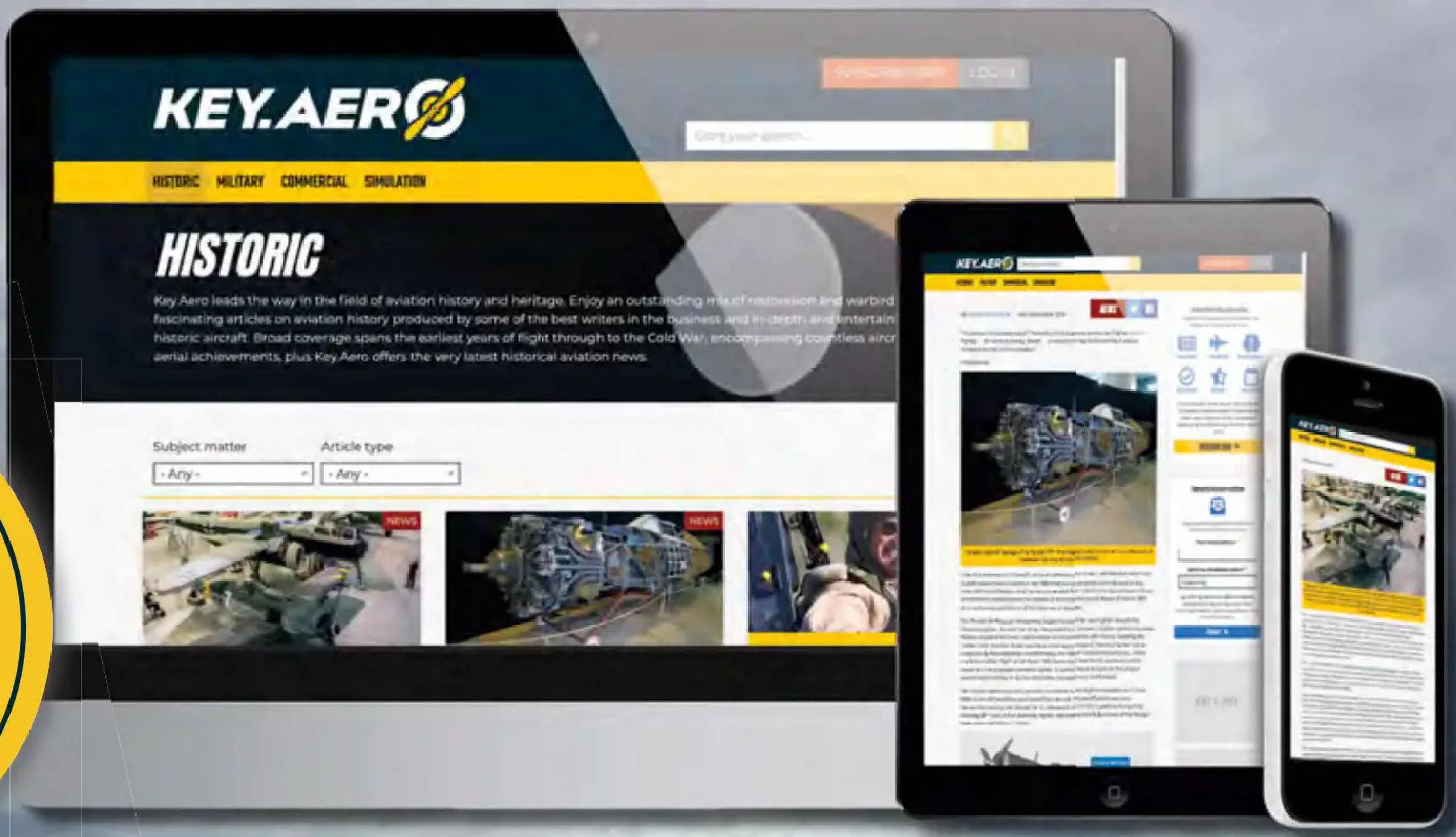
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